ACINGS
from the ACTS
of the APOSTLES

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TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES;

OR

THIRTY YEARS OF CHRISTIAN WORK.

TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES;

OR,

Thirty Years of Christian Work.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE rise and early progress of any remarkable movement must ever have an interest for the thoughtful and the inquiring. We see then some of the original labourers at work. We learn something of the springs of the movement. And, whilst noticing results, we can trace the causes which conduced to its success. If that is true of the many remarkable movements of which this world has been the theatre, what shall we say of the rise and early progress of Christianity? That must ever be to the Christian a study of intense interest.

A movement like it has never been known. It started into life with all the energy of a giant, just when to human thoughts the mission inaugurated by its Founder had received its death-blow. It spread without human patronage, and without the aid of human power. The great ones of the earth where it arose, and those who wielded the sword of government in different countries to which it spread, were none of them at first in its favour, but for the most part manifestly hostile. Yet it progressed. Threats, imprisonments, scourgings, tumults, legal prosecutions, and even the fear of martyrdom, were alike insufficient to cow its supporters, or to check their ardour in propagating their views. It was intensely aggressive. It admitted of no compromise with any creed in the

world. It claimed to be the true faith; and, as such, alone offering that which was needful for everlasting salvation. It had confessedly truth in common with Judaism, yet was jealous of any Judaising teaching. It alone, it proclaimed, could furnish any inquirer with the full revelation vouchsafed by God, for the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. iii. 15).

We have read in the Gospel of Luke of the birth and life on earth of its Founder. The birthplace, however, of the movement recorded in the Acts was really an upper room in Jerusalem, its time was the feast of Pentecost, and its first company numbered one hundred and twenty souls. But the number of its adherents in that city swelled to upwards of three thousand ere its first day had closed. And that remarkable result was effected simply by preaching the Gospel of the grace of God. Soon the company numbered five thousand. Priests and people in Jerusalem and Judæa, and subsequently men and women of wealth and position elsewhere, came under the sound of the preached Word, felt its power, and bowed to it as the truth of God. Never before had people of all classes and of various creeds in such numbers given heed to a message from heaven.

That a history should be written of such a movement need not surprise us. But, as with another remarkable movement fifteen centuries earlier, only one history has in each case come down, written in the latter case by an eyewitness, and in the former by a contemporary of that which he records.

Profane history of their several dates, as far as preserved to our day, knows little or nothing of the marvels that the inspired historians record. Nor is this to be wondered at.

For as with Israel at the Exodus, so with Christians in apostolic times, the conflict lay between them and the ruling powers of their day. Naturally, chroniclers of those times, who recorded the victories of their rulers, were little likely to hand down records of their defeats. And such there were in connection with the struggles against the emancipation of the Israelites, as well as against the rise and spread of Christianity. An authentic history, however, we have of both these epochs. Inspired histories we have to call them, because written under the guidance and by the direction of the Holy Ghost.

Remarkable indeed, as we have called it, was the first movement we have referred to, because it was the springing up, as it were, suddenly of a nation into political existence, with a country in prospect to which they were marching. Yet the second movement was the more remarkable, since it was the taking out of nations of a people to be gathered only to the Lord. In the former case it was the dawn of political life of a nation, born, as it were, in a day. In the latter it was the calling out of an assembly, limited to no country, peculiar to no race, embracing men and women of different nationalities, formerly practising diverse religious rites, and the blending them into one company, uniting all by the tie of spiritual brotherhood, and knitting them close together as members of that one body of which the Head was the crucified One in heaven. Marvellous were some facts in connection with each. The Red Sea had been divided for the passage of the Israelitish host, and the waters of the Jordan were arrested to let the people go over dryshod. That night in the sea and that day in the river channel were surely never forgotten by those who were present. And night after

night, too, in the wilderness, a food, hitherto unknown on earth, and never again supplied after Israel rested on the west of Jordan, fell around their camp wherever it was pitched.

Yet more marvellous were some of the facts connected with the latter movement. Galilæan fishermen were heard suddenly speaking in languages they had never learnt. They spoke intelligibly, and doubtless fluently. They spoke in the ears of those in whose mother tongue they were expressing themselves. These heard, they marvelled, and attested that the men were speaking in the tongue in which each listener was born. Other marvels there were; for, what had never been known, the shadow of Peter passing along the street was eagerly desired by sick ones to overshadow them, and clothes from Paul's body conveyed healing virtue to such as had need of it.

Further, the Apostles were imprisoned; the doors were locked; the keepers outside were on guard; yet the whole company, the Twelve, were brought out by angelic agency, without the knowledge or suspicion of even one of the warders, who were found in the morning to be guarding an empty gaol! And the Apostles, thus set free, were found continuing their mission, publicly speaking in the court of the Temple "all the words of this life." The rulers now doubted, and well they might, whereunto that would grow. Then Peter, arrested, and imprisoned by the king, and chained to two soldiers to keep him safe, was set free in the hours of night without one of his guards being aware of it. He walked out of the prison unchallenged, and, accompanied by the angel, passed out by the iron gate into the city, which had opened of its own accord. Bolts and bars, soldiers and warders, were alike powerless

to detain those whom the Lord would set free. Divine power was working for and with the Christians.

Another startling fact was recorded. The relentless persecutor of the new faith was suddenly converted, and became a most zealous champion of the truth, confounding the Jews as he reasoned with them. The work still spread wider and wider. Gentiles were converted, and Christian assemblies began to be formed outside the land of promise. What the rabble of Thessalonica declared was indeed true—the world was being turned upside-down.

Then at Philippi Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and their feet made fast in the stocks; and though their backs had been lacerated by scourging, unjustly and unlawfully administered, and their wounds remained undressed, yet their spirits were free, and prayers and praises at night poured forth from their lips. The prisoners heard them. Suddenly an earthquake took place. The doors were opened. Every one's bonds were loosed. The prisoners were free. Yet none escaped. Of liberty, so dear to the captive, no one availed himself. And, stranger than all, the jailor was found prostrate before those two whose feet he had made fast in the stocks, anxiously inquiring of them the way of salvation. Nor did he ask in vain. The enemy would, if possible, stop the work in Philippi. It burst out afresh, where none would have looked for it—inside the walls of that city's prison.

Then, too, the energy of faith, as displayed in the Acts, must not be forgotten. We see the disciples, when threatened with the rulers at Jerusalem, kneeling together in prayer for boldness to speak the Word. And Paul, stoned one day at Lystra, and drawn out of the city for dead, departed on the next day to preach the Gospel

in Derbe. Nothing damped their energies or chilled their ardour. And what shall we say of manifestations of grace—as Stephen praying for his murderers, and Paul and Silas preserving the jailor from impending self-destruction? Ere closing, we must call attention, first, to that touching scene of men, women, and children on their knees on the shore at Tyre, and under the open canopy of heaven, commending Paul and his company to the Lord—an open-air prayer-meeting on no common occasion; and, next, to that last meal on board the vessel within sound of breakers, yet not in sight of land, when Paul encouraged the toiling, half-famished company to take food, his faith in the promise of God imparting confidence to all on board.

No romance could be more thickly studded with incidents of the deepest interest than this short, simple, yet truthful narrative of St. Luke, destitute as it is of any rhetorical flourish or wordy embellishment. A history he has, under God, given us which we venture to say is without parallel in the ordinary writings of men. It is the history of the power of the Word of God, that sword of the Spirit wielded by men under the guidance of the Holy Ghost—miracles attesting in the first place the commencement of a new dispensation, and then confirming the word of the first preachers of the Christian faith.

To this book, so fruitful in instruction for the labourer and for the ordinary disciple as well, the reader's attention is sought to be directed in the following pages. And may it be that a fresh study of the *Acts* shall increase in the former his confidence in the power of the Word, and minister to the latter refreshment and comfort, as he recalls the care of the Lord evinced for all those given to Him by His Father.

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TRACINGS FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

INTRODUCTION.

"THE Acts of the Apostles," or the shorter title "Acts," is the designation in one of the oldest uncial MSS. of that book of the New Testament which is the earliest and the only inspired history of the Church of God on record.

As to its author there can be no doubt. The writer of the Third Gospel is the writer of the Acts. And the same man for whom that Gospel was written was before his mind when he penned this the later history. Luke is by general consent acknowledged to be the writer of the Third Gospel. He must therefore by consequence be the writer of the Acts, as its opening sentence indicates.

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken [or, received] up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the Apostles whom He had chosen" (i. 1, 2). So reads the short introduction. Luke had written an account of the Lord Jesus Christ's sojourn upon earth from His birth to His ascension. He will now write an account of the effect produced in early years by the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell on this earth in the Church of God.

For about thirty-three years was the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling here below. Of the Church's history, for the first

thirty years of its existence, Luke writes for the benefit directly of Theophilus, and indirectly for all his readers in subsequent ages.

Who Theophilus was, in whom the Church historian was so deeply interested, as we have remarked in the companion volume, that on the Gospel of Luke,* is now wholly unknown. How Luke became acquainted with him, and where, are facts buried in oblivion. His name only has been imperishably preserved, being embalmed in the pages of Holy Writ. Yet some day we shall see him. He will come with Christ. He will reign with Christ. And the teacher and the pupil will be together in glory, both trophies of Divine grace. We have said we know nothing of Theophilus—of his parentage, of his abode, or of his life. Very different is it as to the historian. Though neither his birth nor his death are matters substantiated by reliable history, we know a good deal about him from the Acts and from the Epistles of St. Paul. But having traced that out, as far as Scripture is our guide, in the volume already referred to, there is no need to repeat it here. We would only now remind the reader that he first joined Paul at Troas (Acts xvi. 10); then went with him to Philippi, where apparently he stayed till the Apostle revisited it (xx. 6); after which he travelled with him to Jerusalem, sailed with him to Rome, and never left him, that we read of, till the latter's martyrdom.

Uncial MSS.—Taking the period covered by his Gospel and the Acts together, Luke travels over the first six decades of the Christian era—years these were of eventful interest indeed. Ere the period connected with his Gospel had closed, it became evident, and was openly confessed, that a great prophet had been raised up, and that God had visited His people (Luke vii. 16). So declared the multitude of Nain, when the widow's son was brought back to life by the commanding voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. But they thought only of that which concerned Israel, and

* *From Advent to Advent*: E. Marlborough & Co., London.

their words had no reference to anything beyond. In the second part of these eventful decades a new thing was witnessed. God had visited "the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts xv. 14). So spake James at the first Christian council. Interesting then, how interesting must this history ever be to us! Yet if the number of uncial MSS. which have preserved its text be any guide to the estimation in which it was formerly held, it must be admitted that it did not meet with that general acceptance which it deserved. For of those containing the whole Gospels or parts of them, we can now reckon up sixty-six. Of those containing the Pauline Epistles, either wholly or portions, only twenty can be cited. But of the uncials which have handed down the Acts, either the whole of the book or but fragments of it, only fifteen in all can be named.* Copies therefore of the Acts in the days of uncial writing were evidently in no great request.

Just three uncial MSS. give the Acts entire. These are the Alexandrian in the British Museum, the Vatican at Rome, and the Sinaitic at St. Petersburg. These three are the most ancient MSS. of the New Testament known. Another, the Porphyrian, is later, dating about the ninth century. This uncial contains all the Acts but chapters i.-ii. 13. Another MS., the Codex Laudianus, we would here notice. Now kept at Oxford, it was once in the possession of Archbishop Laud—hence its name Laudianus—and was by him presented to that University. Written most likely in Western Europe, says Scrivener in his *Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 159, it may have been brought to England by Archbishop Theodore, and was certainly, it is thought, used by Bede, the celebrated English historian, who died about A.D. 735. It is a bilingual codex, having the Greek text with a Latin translation side by side in parallel columns. It lacks xxvi. 29 to xxviii. 26. The

* Tischendorf's *Novum Testamentum*, vol. iii., 8th edition, p. 388.

other uncial MSS. of the Acts contain but portions, more or less in extent.

What is true regarding the uncial MSS. of the Acts is no less true of the cursive MSS. About 638 such MSS. of the Gospels are reckoned up by Scrivener. Of such containing St. Paul's Epistles, he enumerates as distinct copies 295; whilst for the Acts and Catholic Epistles, which are usually found together, the same authority only gives 252. All this bears out the remark of Chrysostom, quoted by Meyer, that the Book of the Acts was much less known and read than the Gospels.

The Canon of the New Testament.—A few words on the order of the canon of the New Testament may not be out of place. We have said that the Acts and the Catholic Epistles are usually found together in MSS. This is the case in the three oldest uncials—the Vatican, the Sinaitic, and the Alexandrian. Yet as to this order there was evidently no fixed rule, nor was the place assigned the Acts in the sacred volume always that next to the Gospels. For in the Codex Sinaiticus the thirteen Epistles of Paul precede the Acts and the Catholic Epistles. Again, in the Codex Bezæ it is evident that the Catholic Epistles had preceded the history of the Acts. Then in the enumeration of the books of the New Testament, whether by councils or by individual writers, no fixed order obtained. The Gospels, though not always in the same order as we have them, hold the first place. The Apocalypse, if mentioned, for the most part comes last. At times the Acts and Catholic Epistles are mentioned before the Pauline writings; at times this order is reversed. The council of Carthage (A.D. 397) mentions the sacred books of the New Testament in the following order: the Gospels, the Acts, Paul's Epistles, the Catholic Epistles (James excepted), and the Revelation.

Amongst writers the same diversity obtains. Eusebius (A.D. 315—340) mentions the Acts next after the Gospels, and the Pauline Epistles are noticed before mentioning the

Catholic Epistles, the order with which by our English Bible we are made familiar. On the other hand, Athanasius (A.D. 326—373) and Cyril (A.D. 349—386) give the Catholic Epistles a place next after the Acts and before the Pauline Epistles, just the order in those old uncial MSS. the Alexandrian and the Vatican. But Augustine (A.D. 355—430) as well as Innocent of Rome (A.D. 402) agree in quite a different arrangement, naming the Acts after all the Epistles and just before the Revelation.* From this it is plain that there never was an arrangement of the books recognised as of Divine or even of canonical authority, though the Acts was unquestionably reckoned by those writers as part of the New Testament canon.

Attacks.—Of course, like other books of Scripture, it has been attacked, both in ancient and in modern times. The Ebionites, Severians, Marcionites, and Manichæans quarrelled with it, because it failed to support their special tenets, but were unable to shake the general belief in its genuineness and authenticity. In modern times writers have risen up to question, and more than question, its right to be in the sacred canon as part of inspired Scripture. Yet the Acts remains in the estimation of most as a genuine and inspired history, and really written by Luke. Like a rock in the sea, around which the waves dash themselves only to be broken, whilst the rock remains immovable, so is it with Scripture. It has withstood, and will withstand, all the efforts of men to dislodge it from its position and annul its claim to be a written revelation from above. At times it may have seemed as if its credibility was shaken—like the rock momentarily hidden from view by the spray of the waves which have broken over it. But as that reappears unshaken, whatever has been the violence of the waters, so Scripture will emerge from all siftings and critical examinations as what it really is—the Word of our God. If the attempts of men in early days, soon after the

* See Wordsworth's *Canon of the Scriptures*, Appendix A.

apostolic age, failed to dislodge the Acts from its position as inspired Scripture, attempts in these days of a similar kind will surely fail. Living near the time of the writer, with men still on the earth who had been conversant with the Apostles, or with those who had enjoyed personal acquaintance with them, the early opponents had an advantage to which modern ones can lay no claim. Yet they failed; and modern attacks on the Acts are witnesses of that. These, then, in their turn will fail, and the book will remain unscathed as long as the Church of God is here below.

Chronological Data.—We have intimated that the history covers about the first thirty years of the Church's existence, and we add that also of the establishment of the form of the kingdom called the kingdom of the heavens, a term with which Matthew's Gospel and the parables contained in it have made us familiar. Yet chronological data is rarely furnished us by Luke. He writes as one who was acquainted with the facts he narrates, introducing a reference to a date here and there, but in nowise as one forming a journal or even a chronicle of the different years.

The first distinct reference to a date that we meet with is that of the famine in the days of Claudius Cæsar. It lasted a considerable time between A.D. 44-48. Barnabas and Saul, charged with contributions from Christians at Antioch, went up to Jerusalem to convey that token of brotherly fellowship and love. Most probably, having been forewarned by Agabus of its approach, they went up either just previous to its commencement, or in the very early days of that severe visitation. The next date that we can find is that of the death of Herod Agrippa I., which took place A.D. 44. Then we read of the proconsulship of Gallio at the time that Paul was at Corinth. This is set down for A.D. 53. Another, and the last note of time, is the commencement of the procuratorship of Porcius Festus, A.D. 60. Assuming that the outpouring of the Spirit took

place at Pentecost in the year 30 A.D., Paul's conversion is set down at A.D. 37. So starting from Pentecost, we have Paul's conversion just seven years after that event. What interesting work had gone on! What surprises were still in store for the saints! In the next heptad, not only had Samaria received the Word, but Gentiles began to be numbered among the converts, and Antioch, destined to become the chief centre of foreign missionary effort, had been evangelised by earnest men of Cyprus and Cyrene. The first seven years close with the conversion of a persecutor. The second seven years end with the death of Herod Agrippa, who had also played the part of persecutor of the Christians, but in order to ingratiate himself with the Jews. Nine years now roll by, eventful years indeed; for during them the Gospel was planted in Asia Minor, and had reached as far as Corinth, witnessing everywhere to the power of the truth, and of its suitability for Gentiles of every social class, equally with all ranks among the Jews. Seven years more run on, and the Apostle, who had wrought such marvels at Ephesus, is a prisoner of the Romans at Cæsarea, kept for the hearing of Cæsar.

The above are the chief chronological data found in this history, which is a record of God's work on earth by His Word, showing how it spread from Jerusalem and Judæa, first to Samaria, then to Antioch and to Asia Minor, and then to Achaia, the modern Morea, embracing several centres of the heathen world, as Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth, in all of which it gained adherents, winning souls for Christ. Doctrinal disquisitions or treatises on Church truth we shall look for in vain in its pages—the subject of the council at Jerusalem excepted. But we do learn how the Gospel was preached, and what were the great lines of teaching handled by the Apostle Paul. Luke's evident aim was to trace the successive steps of the new movement, carried on under the guidance and personal superintendence of the Holy Ghost. For the labourers in the Word of that day were

subject to no human authority in their service, nor were they guided in it by apostolic directions. The work spread, and manifested itself to be especially of God. Fields opened up, and labourers entered on them, often before the Apostles were aware of the fresh development which was taking place. They heard what *had been* done, yet for the most part had no hand in directing it.

To a detailed *study* of this interesting history let us now turn. We shall find it embraces acts of Peter (i.-xii.) and acts of Paul (xiii.-xxviii.). These may be said roughly to divide the book. We shall see, too, the opening up of different fields of labour, after attention has been first directed to displays of Divine power in connection with the work in Jerusalem, the book ending with Paul a prisoner at Rome, yet free to communicate to any who came to him truth needful for their everlasting welfare. Hence we might also divide the Acts into three great parts, illustrating respectively the *power* of God, the *word* of God, and the *grace* of God to a failing servant. All this will, we trust, be made apparent as we proceed. We would only here add, that authorities have been consulted, though they are not always mentioned. Meyer as a commentator and Mr. Lewin as a biographer for historical and topographical details have been freely used; and in quoting the text the Authorised Version has been generally followed, reference being made to the Revised Version where called for.

I.

SEVEN WEEKS.

ACTS I.

FROM the morrow after the Passover Sabbath seven weeks were to be numbered (Lev. xxiii. 15); then came the feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, as it is called in the New Testament (Acts ii. 1, xx. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 8), nothing in the Jewish ecclesiastical year of any great moment taking place between. In the year, however, of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection an important event occurred between these feasts, which divided the seven weeks into two unequal periods—viz., forty days and ten days.

The Forty Days.—For forty days the Lord was manifested to His disciples as risen from the dead. During those weeks He appeared to them at different times and in different places. On the day of His resurrection five manifestations took place—viz., to Mary Magdalene in the garden, to the women between that and the city, to the two who went to Emmaus, to Peter, and then to the disciples in the upper room. A week after He appeared again at Jerusalem to the disciples, when Thomas was with them (John xx. 26). On a mountain in Galilee He met the disciples by appointment, possibly the five hundred of whom St. Paul writes (Matt. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 6). On the shore of the Lake of Galilee He appeared without previous warning, and invited the disciples who had been fishing, but fruitlessly during the night, to come and dine (John xxi. 1-14). At some time or other He was seen of James (1 Cor. xv. 7). These

different appearances, save some of those on the first day, are unnoticed by Luke. But he tells us, what the other writers do not, the general character of the Lord's communications to His disciples during all that time. His words, writing of these forty days, are as follows: "To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to [or, concerning] the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3). Though the King had been crucified, yet the kingdom would be established in power; and, what was contrary to all precedents, the crucified One, who had died, would nevertheless return to reign. Deeply interesting must these confidential communications have been. Confidential they may be called; for no details of them have been committed to writing for our instruction.

Last Words.—The day of His final departure drew near. His last counsels the disciples were now receiving. And being assembled with them, or as the margin gives it, "eating with them," the Lord charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but there to wait for the promise of the Father, "which"—and now Luke quotes the Master's very words—"ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (4, 5). We have noticed the marginal reading; for the earliest versions—the Syriac and the Vulgate—support it. Greek writers, as Chrysostom and Theophylact, accept it; Jerome, too, endorses it; and *Meyer*, of moderns, adopts it. Without further entering on the question of the meaning of the Greek verb, we may remark that the marginal reading would be quite in character with Peter's statement to Cornelius and his friends (x. 41), that the disciples ate and drank with the Lord after He rose from the dead. John xxi. is the only incontrovertible instance to which we can turn. But Peter's statement seems to imply that it was not once only that they had eaten with Him after the Resurrection. So it

may quite have been that they ate with Him on the occasion to which Luke refers. What seasons must such as these have been! Of what grace do they speak! What freedom, what privilege, allowed the disciples! What interest in them on the Lord's part! How much might have been recorded had a diary of events been kept! But such was not to be. And now those opportunities so precious were about for ever to close. The risen but not yet ascended Lord would be in that condition no longer. With just one more question from them, and an answer from Him, their personal intercourse with Him as yet on earth would cease. But we must not anticipate.

Baptism with the Holy Ghost.—Of the baptism with the Spirit as near at hand the Lord now spoke. He had not previously distinctly mentioned it. For it they were to wait in Jerusalem. It would take place for them in the metropolis of Judaism. It was a new and a distinctive Christian blessing. All the disciples would share in it. This baptism John, the son of Zacharias, had first mentioned, and that in connection with the Messiah. "I indeed," he said, when people were musing whether he was the Christ or not—"I indeed baptise you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke iii. 15, 16). A far-reaching view of the Lord's work the Baptist here takes. For the baptism with fire, as the context in both Matt. iii. and Luke iii., where alone it is mentioned, plainly intimates, is connected with the execution of judgment. So it is future. The baptism with the Holy Ghost has taken place, never that we know of to be repeated, though the effects of it continue. Of this baptism John again spoke after he had baptised the Lord (John i. 32, 33), having learnt by the fulfilment of the sign given to him, in the descent of the Holy Spirit and His remaining on the Lord, that it was He who would baptise with the Holy Ghost. To this same event

the Lord referred in the upper room on the day of His resurrection, when He spoke to the assembled disciples of the power with which they would be endued from on high. Now on the approach of His ascension He openly spoke of their coming baptism. It was near at hand.

We have said that this is a distinctive Christian blessing. For we learn from 1 Cor. xii. 13 that by it the Body of Christ is formed. "By [or, in] one Spirit are we all baptised into one Body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free." All real Christians share in this as regards its effects, though all were not present on either occasion when it took place (Acts ii., xi. 15, 16). St. Paul was not even converted at the time. Yet he, in common with the Corinthians, came to share in it. So do all real Christians, recipients of the Holy Ghost. This is an important truth; and the fact that all true believers —*i.e.*, who share in forgiveness of sins—necessarily have part in it is a very important point.

The Last Question.—So far we read of the character of the interview with the disciples during those forty days. Now the time for the last question came. "Lord, wilt [or, dost] Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" His reign in power was in their thoughts. For forty days had He been with them. Was that kingdom, then, near at hand? Of its advent He had spoken (Luke xix. 12-15), and of Jerusalem welcoming her returning King (Matt. xxiii. 39). On things pertaining to the kingdom He had apparently freely discoursed since His resurrection. So now of Israel's future greatness they inquired. Their question He did not answer. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." An answer this was in character with His words before the cross. "Of that day or [not, and] that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). The distant future was not laid open to them. Of the near future, however,

He did speak, and acquainted them with the work to which they were called. In His prayer to His Father He had intimated something of it, as He prayed for those who should believe on Him through their word (John xvii. 20). On the day He rose He spoke of the going forth of the Gospel of God's grace, but for that service they were to wait the promise of the Father (Luke xxiv. 49). At the end of the Gospel of Matthew (xxviii. 19), and that also of Mark (xvi. 15), we learn that nothing less than the world was to be the bounds of the sphere of evangelistic service. Now in Acts i. 8 He tells them of power they would receive by the Holy Ghost coming on them, and then sketched out their widening sphere of labour—Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. In this order—for Luke in his way is a methodical writer—does the historian narrate the progress of the work. Samaria was evangelised in chap. viii., after which the work spread, and Gentiles were blessed (x.), and then far and wide the Gospel made its way.

The Ascension.—The last words had been spoken relative to their work. Then in the act of blessing them, and near to Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, the Lord was parted from them (Luke xxiv. 50, 51), and taken up into heaven. They saw Him ascend, but a cloud hid Him from their sight. How far they watched Him going up we know not; but the cloud hid Him from their further view. What, however, they could not see we know. He then ascended far above all heavens, and led captivity captive likewise (Eph. iv. 8-10). Unwitnessed by the world, and unknown to it, He ascended to the right hand of God. But angelic powers were not unaware of it, nor were the principalities and powers of evil unconcerned spectators. His triumph they surely witnessed, and the effect of it they well knew. For He led them captive, and opened up that communication between heaven and earth which never has been closed. And the witnesses

of this last to us are the gifts He gives unto men—even instruments for the carrying on of the work of God upon earth till He shall come.

A Hope.—God is the God of hope (Rom. xv. 13). He gives His people a hope. So just at that moment, when naturally the hearts of the little band—the Eleven—might have sunk within them, two men stood by them in white apparel, and spoke words of comfort, seasonable indeed to those who were still gazing upward. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken [or, received] up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11). He would return, return in person, and that to earth. And, as we know, on the mountain from which He then ascended His feet shall again stand (Zech. xiv. 4). That mountain, consecrated by the impress of His feet on that memorable occasion, will be consecrated afresh, when He shall again stand upon it. The words of those men were enough. They ceased gazing upwards, and returned to the city of Jerusalem, without the Lord. Downcast, shall we say? No. With great joy, as Luke in his Gospel has recorded (xxiv. 52). The hope of His return filled them with joy, in that which naturally we should have viewed as the first hour of their desolation.

Angelic Ministry.—Those men were angels. At times in the past God has sent such messengers to communicate with His earthly creatures. Two angels in human form visited Lot, and brought him out of Sodom. The law was ordained by angels, said Stephen (Acts vii. 53). With that the Apostle Paul's statement in Galatians (iii. 19) is in agreement. Often had they appeared on the scene in Israel's history, ministering at times providentially (1 Kings xix. 5), at times communicating something of the Divine will. By this latter service Daniel and Zechariah were especially favoured. In New Testament times Gabriel visited the aged priest Zacharias, and later the Virgin

Mary. At the Lord's birth there appeared first one announcing the glad tidings, and then was heard a multitude praising God (Luke ii.). Yet though twice in the Lord's life He received their ministrations (Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43), they were not used at any time whilst He was on earth as channels for Divine revelation. We can all understand the propriety of that. He died. Again they appeared to minister the information suited for the moment. Those visiting the tomb of the company of the women saw them and heard them, and they carried away the message they were charged by them to deliver. But during the forty days of the Lord's presence with His own we read not of angelic ministry. And even on Mary's second visit to the tomb they retired into the background, and let the Lord discover Himself to her. When He was present, the angels were silent. The Lord ascended. Two angels then immediately appeared, sent to encourage the Eleven by announcing the certainty of the return of Jesus in person. "Shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." On the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Godhead, came to dwell upon earth. Angels then again receded, as it were, into the background, ministering still providentially (Acts v. 19, xii. 7, xxvii. 23; Heb. i. 14), but not as vessels to communicate Christian truth. With this agree the act and word of the angel who visited Cornelius. He directed him to send for Peter, who would tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved (Acts xi. 14). For neither the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God, nor the present teaching to establish souls in the faith, has been committed to angels. The Holy Ghost is here, and He uses human instruments for that purpose. In the Apocalypse, however, angelic ministry reappears. That book unfolds the future of the earth, and the judgments which must take place. Angels will be the executors of those judgments, so in character with that it may be that one speaks therein to John.

The Upper Room.—The Eleven returned to Jerusalem, and assuredly communicated to the other disciples that which had taken place. Were these latter dispirited? There is no trace of it, though now they must have realised their orphan state (John xiv. 18); for the Lord had gone, and the Holy Ghost had not yet come. To the upper chamber where they abode the Eleven betook themselves, with the women, and Mary the mother of the Lord, and His brethren, a company apart from their Jewish acquaintances. Here for the last time the Apostles are severally enumerated, though in an order which varies from the lists in the three Synoptic Gospels (Matt. x.; Mark iii.; Luke vi.). Only one Judas was now to be reckoned in the apostolic company, called in Matthew and in Mark Thaddæus (Lebbæus should in the former be probably omitted), but in Luke, as well as in this place in the Acts, designated as Judas of James.* "These all," writes our Church historian, "with one accord continued in prayer† with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren" (Acts i. 14). Such was their occupation, an expression of dependence and of desire. Here, too, for the

* According to some, the word *brother* is to be supplied, as in the A.V.; according to others, *son* should be understood, as in the R.V. The Syriac in Luke vi. 16 and here reads "son." Neither of these is inconsistent with the usage of the language. See Winer, and Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*. We do know of Jude who calls himself, and of course was aware of it, brother of James, the writer of the Epistle which bears his name. If Judas be the *son* of some James, it is a James wholly unknown to us, and we might in that case have looked for something wherewith to identify him, like Simon Iscariot, the father of Judas (John vi. 71). But that has not been supplied. Lacking that, "brother," rather than "son," seems more probably to be understood. Meyer decides for *son*. Wordsworth and Alford supply *brother*. We would just add that the list of the Eleven here given has point, showing the fulfilment of the Lord's words, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John xviii. 9).

† "And supplication" should be omitted.

last time are the women mentioned, and the Virgin likewise, save that Mary the mother of John Mark is introduced into the narrative in chap. xii. Personal service to Christ had characterised the women. That necessarily ceased, though doubtless they were still at work in their proper sphere. But He who had been their great object being no longer here, no more notice is taken of them after this time. Faithful they had been. Faithful they were still, and in prayer with the Apostles they continued. Another class we must remark on: "His brethren." These were distinct from any of the Apostles, and were perhaps brought to confess the Lord by His death and the knowledge of His resurrection. "Neither did His brethren believe on Him," John wrote (vii. 5). That could be said no longer. For those who with His mother had sought once to hinder Him in His work (Mark iii. 31) are with her just after His ascension in the company of the Eleven in the upper room, as definitely and openly to be ranked among His disciples.

Bereft of the Master's company, what could they do? Was the movement begun during His life now to collapse? Were those gathered by His ministry to disperse, and the company to disappear like snow before the noonday sun? Could they hope, a little band, and a feeble one indeed, looking at themselves, to stand their ground against the opposition of constituted authority, and in the presence of hostile crowds? It was true the Lord had risen from the dead. They had seen Him. But the world had not; and no enthusiasm had been stirred in His favour by the announcement of the soldiers of that which they had witnessed at the tomb. To the natural man their cause was not a promising one. But they had a hope to which the Jews were strangers; and, assured that the God of their fathers had not forsaken them, whilst waiting for the fulfilment of their hope, they continued in prayer; for work, they knew, was before them, when the time to commence it should arrive.

Matthias.—Meantime preparation for that work, as far as they could make it, was undertaken. Judas Iscariot by transgression had fallen, that he might go to his own place (Acts i. 25). Solemn indeed! Was his fall unforeseen? It was unexpected by the Eleven, we know. But Scripture had foreshadowed it, and predicted too the substitution of another in his place. To this Peter calls attention at the time of their greatest weakness. Many a saint has known the comfort that a word of Scripture has ministered to him in some special time of need. What comfort must these have found, as they learnt, and saw it plainly set forth, that the heartless and selfish conduct of Judas had been foreknown to God! His act of treachery was the fulfilment of the prophetic word. The Holy Ghost had predicted it. David had been the penman to write it. And provision had been made to meet the present circumstances. To Psalms lxix. 25 and cix. 8 the Apostle Peter refers. The first reference speaks of what should be meted out to the persecutor; the second, of succession in his office. In Judas, by his death, the first quotation had a fulfilment. His habitation was desolate. He had died by his own hand (Matt. xxvii. 5). The second prediction was also to be fulfilled.

Peter therefore suggested to the assembled company that the one hundred and ninth Psalm shed light on the situation, and afforded guidance for them in the present circumstances. All agreeing, they prepared to carry out the injunction of the Psalm by nominating two, one of whom was to fill the traitor's place, and with the Eleven bear witness to the truth of the Lord's resurrection. Nominating two, we have said; not meaning by their own will to fill up the vacancy; but discerning that two of the disciples seemed fitted for that office, they put them forward as equally qualified as far as man could judge. Prayer then was offered. Lots were cast, to learn which of the two the Lord had chosen. On Matthias the lot fell. He was therefore numbered with

the eleven Apostles. Henceforth there were twelve (Acts i. 26, ii. 14, vi. 2), all of whom had known the Lord before His death, and could witness of His resurrection. It is evident that Paul, called subsequently to the apostolate, could never have answered to that which Peter declared was a requisite on this occasion. The twelfth Apostle he was not; nor was Barnabas either. They could neither of them have been that.

Judas Iscariot.—Peter had spoken of the traitor's end, and gave details then known, but not reported elsewhere. He confirmed the information furnished by Matthew, both that a field was bought with the thirty pieces of silver, and also that Judas died a violent death. There is nothing really inconsistent in the two statements about the purchase of the field. For that piece of ground, bought with the money, though the transaction was carried out by the chief priests, as Matthew declares, might be spoken of in the words of Peter: "This man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity." The money with which it was bought really belonged to Judas. Doubtless, had we full details, we should see that the account of both Apostles is correct in every particular. Both speak of the matter as one of common notoriety. And Matthew, who was present when Peter described the end of Judas, must of course have been quite conversant with that which his brother Apostle had stated. Ignorance or mistake on the part of either we cannot admit. Peter spoke of it a few weeks after the occurrence. Matthew, it may be, wrote his Gospel but a few years after the death of Judas, and when all the circumstances of it could not have been forgotten. Both profess perfect acquaintance with the facts they narrate, and write of them as commonly known. A mistake then, we repeat, we cannot admit, unless it could be demonstrated, which is impossible, that we have all the particulars of this sad history. Till that can be satisfactorily established, becoming modesty should make us believe that it is the lack of

full particulars which causes any difficulty in harmonising the two accounts. We would add that there is nothing in Peter's statement which obliges us to believe that Judas killed himself on that spot known afterwards as Aceldama; and the name given to the field seems to have arisen from the money being the price of blood (Matt. xxvii. 6).*

To return to a more interesting theme. Preparation was made by the election of Matthias to fill up the vacancy caused by Judas Iscariot's fall. A work was before them of which as yet they had little idea, either of its magnitude or of its difficulties. Their faith, however, we see, was undaunted, and they looked forward to that which lay before them with stout hearts. Surely God was comforting and encouraging them who in prayer expressed their dependence, yet doubtless their desire likewise for the power to come, which would enable them to go forward on their mission. Like their forefathers in the days of Nehemiah (iv. 2, 3), their opponents (for now they were becoming conscious that they had such) might despise them. "What do these feeble Jews?" those of old said. Feeble though *they* were, yet they built up the wall of Jerusalem all round in fifty-and-two days. What would that insignificant company do, who meet in the upper room? their enemies might say. There they remain in prayer, but they never come forth to meet us. Utterly incompetent are they to win their way in the world! Did such thoughts pass through their minds? Soon it would be demonstrated that a weapon more effective than any great conqueror had used, and of a more keen edge than a material sword, was to be wielded by that company now apart in that room. By the weapon they would wield trophies would be won, captives, adherents —not by twos or threes, nor by hundreds, but by thousands

* Judas went to his own place. The Lord was in Paradise, and the penitent thief with Him. Separation for ever took place between the Lord and Judas. Fellowship with the Lord for ever was to be the portion of that thief

would they be numbered. And a work would break out in spite of all opposition, which neither the devil nor the ruling powers of earth could possibly put down. Judaism, heathenism, idolatry, and indifference, each and all would feel the power connected with that company, and have to own that they could not successfully overcome it. God would be with them, though the world would be against them. But that little band might truly say, in the words of the prophet Elisha, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings vi. 16).

Let us now see how conquests were brought about.

II.

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS II.

TEN days were running out since the Lord had ascended. As yet the promised Comforter had not come; and cheered though they had been by the angelic messengers announcing the personal return of Christ in the future, they had no fixed time made known, when the promise of the Father would be received. To prayer they betook themselves, and in that exercise they continued.

Pentecost.—"Not many days hence" was all that the Lord had said. Their waiting, therefore, would not be long. Yet why there was any delay, and when exactly it would terminate, were questions which very probably none of them could then have answered. But we know, and surely they must afterwards have understood, that the date in the ecclesiastical calendar had been fixed for well-nigh fifteen centuries, and fixed as definitely as that of the Lord's crucifixion. He, the true Paschal Lamb, suffered at the Passover on the 14th of Nisan. Then, as the antitype to the wave sheaf, the first-fruits of the harvest, His resurrection had taken place on the morrow after the Passover Sabbath. And now the full meaning of the introduction at the feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, of the two wave loaves baked with leaven, that new meat offering unto the Lord, was to receive antitypical elucidation, by the presentation to God, through the Gospel about to go forth, of believers from Jews, and also from Gentiles, as first-fruits unto Him

(James i. 18). This was to be accomplished through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and not otherwise.

So till the day of Pentecost that work, with which we are now made familiar, could not in accordance with the mind of God have its beginning. Yet it could not be delayed for one single day, for that feast lasted just the one day. For seven days they kept the feast of unleavened bread. For eight days they celebrated that of Tabernacles. One day only was appointed for the feast of Pentecost. And as on one day in the year, and one only, the Lord could die—viz., the 14th of Nisan—so on one day in the year, and on one only, as we learn, could the Holy Ghost have come as the promise of the Father. That day was the feast of Pentecost.

The day had come, and "they were all together," as perhaps we should read, "in one place." No one on this occasion was absent from the company. Nor were they at this time in the court of the Temple, or elsewhere in any place of public resort, intermingling with devout Jews, who had come to keep the feast. All together they were, quite apart from others, gathered there surely by the leading of the Spirit. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues [or, tongues parting asunder] like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 2-4). Such is the brief yet distinct account of the coming of the Holy Ghost. The attitude of the company is stated. They were sitting, not engaged in prayer, or they would have been standing. Suddenly the fulfilment of the Lord's words took place. A *sound* was heard; a *sight* was seen; an *effect* was manifested. The *sound* was that of a rushing mighty wind; the *sight* was the tongues cloven, and like fire, which sat upon each of them; the *effect* was that

they all began to speak with tongues. The tongues the disciples saw, but the multitude which quickly assembled apparently did not. For they do not speak of them. The sound they did hear; for this we believe is the historian's meaning, and is so translated by the Revised Version.* The sound, and not any report about it, is that to which St. Luke draws our attention. That sound had collected a great multitude together of the devout Jews then assembled at Jerusalem from every country under heaven. The Temple court must have been thinned that day of its accustomed crowds, for the centre of attraction was the house in which the disciples were assembled.

Cloven Tongues.—Of the cloven tongues on the head of each of the disciples the multitude, as we have remarked, make no mention. Had they seen them, would they not have spoken of them, as well as of the utterances they heard in their several tongues? What did these tongues thus seen portend? Cloven (or, parted), like as of fire,—such is the description. Seen on that occasion, we never read of them being seen again. Cloven (or, divided), they seem to indicate that the recipients of the Spirit would be empowered to speak in more languages than one. And "like as of fire" may foreshadow the effect of the Word of God. The Word discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. iv. 12). And those who persistently refuse obedience to it will find that it will judge them in the last day (John xii. 48). The fire is an emblem of judgment. Of the power of the Word to act on consciences the three thousand bore testimony ere night closed on that eventful day, as, pricked in their hearts, they cried out in agony of soul, "Brethren, what shall we do?" The Word, reaching

* It is questioned what the multitude heard—the sound of the rushing mighty wind, or the report of the wonder taking place in the disciples speaking with tongues. Certainly the former supposition is quite in character with the manner of the Spirit's coming. Meyer, followed by Alford, so takes it.

the conscience now, does act judicially within. Light shines in, and shows the person what he has never seen and judged before. Self-judgment it works now,—that brings blessing. By-and-by it will judge the ungodly, rising up as a witness against them.

Filled with the Holy Ghost, each disciple began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. Intercourse between people of different races and of different countries is much impeded by differences in language. In the beginning it was not so, nor for some time after the Flood was there any language but one. For all sprang from a common ancestry. All spake the language of the original parent. That this was the case, the inspired record in Genesis affirms. "The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Gen. xi. 1). Combination therefore for some settled purpose would be facilitated by that state of things, and men were taking advantage of it to build a city, and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven, adding, "Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Possessed with the thought of their wisdom and their power, they began to build, forgetful that they were creatures wholly dependent on the will of the Creator. How far they had carried out their plans and to what height they had raised their tower are facts not recorded. Whatever commencement was made, the tower was never finished. The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. He confounded their language.* Their work stopped. It was an act of government on God's part, and that act He has never reversed.

But though God has never reversed it, He can, and in the

* Canon Rawlinson writes (*Ancient Monarchies*, vol. i., p. 55): "The subjects of the early Kings [of Chaldæa] are continually designated on the inscriptions by the title of *Kiprat-arbat*, 'The four nations,' or *Arba-lisun*, 'The four tongues.' In Abraham's time, again, the league of four kings seems correspondent to a fourfold ethnic division,

early days of Christianity He did, override it, empowering servants to speak languages which they had not previously studied. Such was the gift of tongues, now for the first time bestowed.

To saints alone was it given. None else could share in it, for it was an effect of receiving the Holy Ghost. He who confounded human speech at Babel, could and did empower some at Jerusalem to speak with tongues they had not previously learnt. Some, we say, because, even in apostolic days, all Christians did not share in this manifestation of the Spirit. In the Acts there are but three occasions on which this power is recorded as having been bestowed—at Pentecost (ii.), at Cæsarea (x.), and at Ephesus (xix.); and on each of these occasions every member of the company who received the Holy Ghost participated in that manifestation of the Spirit. At Corinth, where some shared in that power, all, it would seem, did not (1 Cor. xii. 10, 30, xiv. 5). At Philippi, at Rome, at Thessalonica, and in Galatia we read not of its being bestowed on any of the converts. Paul himself spoke with tongues more than any of the Corinthians. He needed it for his work, and he tells us the purpose of it was to impress and to attract unbelievers (1 Cor. xiv. 22). And as each manifestation of the Spirit had for its object the profit of others, wonderful as was the power of speaking with tongues it was not bestowed on any for mere display or self-glory.

So far we find recounted in Acts ii. 1-4 the *time*, *manner*, and *effect* of the coming of the Holy Ghost. St. Luke, who alone has told us what took place on the night of the Lord's birth, is also the one who has put on record what happened on the morning of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. His

Cushite, Turanian, Semitic, and Arian, the chief authority and ethnic preponderance being with the Cushites. . . . So that it is at least probable that the 'four tongues' intended were not mere local dialects, but distinct languages, the representatives respectively of the four great families of human speech."

contributions to Scripture history are most interesting and most valuable. At the Lord's birth angelic voices were heard. At the Holy Spirit's coming men's mouths were opened in a new and wondrous manner. The shepherds heard the angelic choir break forth in praise to God. Devout men at Jerusalem gave unsolicited testimony to the nature of the communications that came from the lips of the different disciples.

The Multitude.—We have spoken of that which took place in the house. The historian next relates the effect on the multitude which found their attraction centred on that house and on the company within. The sound drew them to the spot, where they heard the voices of the disciples speaking in tones and accents peculiar to each one. Far from their home as many of them were, in a country where Aramaic was the language of the common people, whilst Greek was pretty well understood as the language of commerce of that day, they heard voices which addressed them in their own mother tongue and spoke of the mighty works of God. For that miraculous gift of speech was to be used in the service and for the glory of God. Devout Jews from every nation under heaven heard, and attested, that utterances came forth from the Galilæan company in the language in which they were severally born. Galilæans, they said. Yet surely their speech, whatever it was in which each expressed himself, was grammatically as correct, and in meaning as clear, as those devout Jews could themselves have uttered. It was no unmeaning jargon, no babbling, no gibberish, but intelligent language, which some of that multitude could affirm to others was their own vernacular. From the far north some had come—Parthia, Media, Persia, Mesopotamia, had furnished contingents. From the south, Egypt, Libya, and Cyrene were represented. From the north-west had come representatives from the provinces of Asia Minor. The capital of the empire, too, had helped to swell

the crowd; whilst from the islands of the Mediterranean, as Crete, from the south-east, as Arabia, there were those who heard, and rejoiced to hear, in their own language the wonderful works of God.

God was now speaking to them by human instrumentality, through vessels guided of the Holy Ghost. When God speaks, He desires souls should hear and understand. He who can speak direct to the conscience and hold intelligent intercourse with His creatures, whether the untutored savage or the most cultivated of mankind—He showed His desire that men should hear from Him, in the language with which they were severally familiar, what would conduce to their everlasting welfare. By an exercise of His power He had rendered intercourse between nations a matter, in some measure, of difficulty. By power in connection with grace He made provision, that without let or hindrance different nationalities and those speaking diverse tongues should hear in their own language about His Son, and about salvation.

Confounded, amazed, and in doubt (or, perplexed), thus does Luke describe the crowd. *Confounded*, when they heard each man his own language. *Amazed*, as they remembered that those who addressed them were Galilæans. *Perplexed*, since they could not understand what it meant. Something new, something strange, had undoubtedly happened. What did it portend? Such was the impression produced on many who were present. But others, very probably native-born Jews, who did not understand the different languages, mocked, saying, "These men [rather, they] are filled with new wine." None disputed the fact that something unusual had happened. Yet no one could satisfactorily account for it.

Peter's Sermon.—And no wonder. God, however, would not leave them in doubt; so the Apostles stood up (we last read of them sitting), and Peter lifted up his voice. He spoke aloud, and to an audience such as he doubtless had

never anticipated. "Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words" (Acts ii. 14). The first Christian sermon was now to begin, and Peter, who had thrice denied his Master, was permitted to preach it. For, as we can understand, no other person upon earth could have done it, seeing that to him, and to him only, were committed by the Lord Jesus Christ the keys of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. xvi. 19). The keys, therefore, entrusted by Christ to him, he used that day for the first time.

To the marvellous power given to the disciples, we have seen, people were not indifferent. Mocking on the part of some, earnest inquiry on the part of others, testified to the impressions produced. Neither the mockers, however, nor the devout Jews could offer any reasonable explanation. The Apostles then stood up. All were now to hear what they had to say. And Peter as their mouthpiece expressed himself, addressing especially the home-born Jews. What that movement was *not*, he first took up. "Full of new wine," the mockers had said,—an easy solution, as they thought, of that strange and startling spectacle which they witnessed. But the charge was readily refuted, and the folly of it demonstrated. The time of day should have made the accusers keep silence—it was but the third hour. Men were not wont to be overcome with wine by nine o'clock in the morning. The disciples were not drunk with wine. They were filled with the Spirit. God then was working, and in power; and in explanation of what the marvel was, he proceeded to cite Old Testament Scripture.

Joel.—Now of the outpouring of the Spirit, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel had all written. Isaiah (xxxii. 15, xliv. 3) and Ezekiel (xxxix. 29) predict it, but in connection with the last days, and as a blessing to be bestowed on Israel. Their prophetic horizon in this matter was bounded by the limits of the nation. Joel is different. His range of vision takes in all flesh, and the blessing in

store for such he was empowered to foretell. Now Peter, it will be observed, makes no reference to either Isaiah or Ezekiel, though his audience were admittedly only of Jewish descent; but turns them all to Joel in explanation of the phenomenon then witnessed. Why was this? We can answer, as we plainly see, that no passage in the whole of the Old Testament save Joel (ii. 28-32) could have fitly been quoted that day. God was about to go beyond the narrow bounds of Judaism and to minister blessing to Gentiles. By some of all flesh then, and not only by some of Israel's race, was saving grace to be known. Hence Peter, divinely guided, knew where to turn in the inspired volume for a quotation applicable to the occasion. Divinely guided whence to quote, he was also divinely taught where to stop. He stopped in the middle of a verse, omitting to add that which will be fulfilled in a future day. It should also be observed, that he was careful in the way he introduced the quotation. "This is that," he said; not, "Then was fulfilled." Joel, like his fellow-prophets, predicts the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days. His prophecy therefore, in common with the others, awaits its fulfilment. But as the son of Pethuel writes of the pouring out on *all flesh*, Peter quotes him. And as he describes the effect to be produced on those on whom the Holy Ghost should be poured in a way the other two do not, Joel's prediction therefore, and his alone, could be fitly brought forward to explain what was then witnessed by the multitude, as well as to announce the character of the new dispensation that had just commenced. For again, we remark, "on *all flesh*" are the words of Joel, for not on Israel only was the Spirit to be outpoured. So Peter quotes that prophet, and passes by the other two.

Reading what he gives us, we see that he was quoting exactly from neither the original Hebrew nor from the Greek translation called the Septuagint. For he transposes the clauses about the "old men" and the "young men,"

and adds, in ver. 18, "and they shall prophesy," substituting, too, the word "notable" for "terrible." Further, as we have already stated, he stopped in the middle of a verse. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Joel assigns a reason for that, adding, "for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel ii. 32). Peter stops at the general statement of salvation, true for all dispensations, but carefully forbears quoting to the end, which is applicable only to the future, when the Lord returns to reign at Jerusalem. Divinely guided indeed was the Apostle. For who on earth at that moment, save the Holy Ghost, knew exactly what was to take place, or the character of the work that must precede the advent of Israel's blessing? Who of the Apostles had then understood the complete abeyance of the nation's pre-eminence and blessing, to let Christian times run their course? Naturally he might have finished the verse, for God was at that moment working in Jerusalem; but, filled with the Holy Ghost, he stopped short of that.

Testimony to Christ.—From Scripture explanation, thus furnished, of that which had perplexed the multitude, we are led on to hear why that manifestation had been vouchsafed. To make this plain, it was needful to announce the exaltation to glory at God's right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Jews had but a few weeks before crucified. For the first time was this truth of tremendous import to Israel openly and fearlessly proclaimed. Peter does it, the rest of the Apostles standing up and concurring. Jesus of Nazareth (or, the Nazoræan *) had been among them working in power, His mighty works attesting His approval by God. Delivered up in accordance with Divine and predetermined counsel, they by the hands of lawless

* We follow the historian throughout the Acts in adopting the form *Nazoræan*.

men, as we should there read, had crucified and slain Him. How bold now, and uncompromising, is Peter, who had once quailed before a woman!

All before him he charged with the death of Him of whom God in His life had openly approved. Further, God had raised Him from the dead, "Having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Of whom else who had walked upon earth had that ever been affirmed? Yet Scripture ten centuries previously had predicted it.

To Psalm xvi. 8-11 the Apostle referred, and quoted the passage at length. To whom did it refer? The Psalmist speaks throughout in the first person. *I*, *me*, *my*, are, one or other, introduced in every verse. Was David writing of himself? Impossible. He had died and was buried, and his sepulchre was with them, still tenanted by his dust. Evidently his tomb was then well known. And all were perfectly agreed that he, the first of his dynasty, had not risen from the dead. Yet he wrote of One who would die, and would shortly afterwards be raised; for God would not leave that One's soul in Hades (the place of the unclothed spirits), nor would He suffer His body to see corruption. For centuries that Psalm had been read. Probably every one of the audience was acquainted with it. But to that day none of them could point to any one who had died and say, "Behold the man."

Now, David was a prophet, and wrote of One of his house who would succeed him on the throne. And Peter unfolds the application of the passage. The crucified and risen Nazorean was the man—Jesus was the Christ. All knew that He had died. Peter and those with him knew that He was risen, and he openly declared it. He had seen Him. So, with the eleven Apostles who stood up with him, he was a witness of the resurrection of Christ. But more, he knew, and proclaimed it, that the risen One had ascended; and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy

Ghost, had shed forth that which they then saw and heard.

Would any cavil at the thought of a man in heaven? Another Psalm, also ascribed to David by Peter, and in the Book of Psalms as well, had foretold this: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." David's Lord was to sit at Jehovah's right hand. David's Lord had done that. The proof of it was forthcoming in the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which had that day taken place. The Lord had told the disciples (John xvi. 7): "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." He had departed, and had in consequence sent the Spirit. Peter thus told them all of facts, unquestionable facts. Was that all? No. What conclusions were to be drawn from them? If what he said, and gave Scripture for it, was true of the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus the Nazoræan, God had made that same One whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ. Who with an open mind, and with those Psalms opened up to him, could resist the conclusion thus unequivocally stated? To this the historian leads on.

The multitude, astounded by what they had witnessed, were now pricked in their hearts by the discourse they had heard; and unable to restrain themselves, said, addressing the twelve Apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Apparently, as far as we have gone, we have the text of Peter's address, and not simply some notes of it. What interest it excited—and well it might—as the people heard the Scriptures of the prophets expounded in this way! Often they may have read those Psalms, and have been told by the scribes that they were prophetic announcements about the Messiah; but never before had they heard, or could they have heard, that in the past few weeks they had received their fulfilment. It was Christian ministry to which they now listened—ministry so different from any

with which the scribes could feed them. It was the opening up of the Divine Word, and the application of those two Psalms to the crucified One. "He shall take [or rather, taketh] of Mine, and shall show it unto you," the Lord had said (John xvi. 15), with reference to the coming and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit had now come, and was showing that day by Peter things concerning the Lord Jesus.

On the day of the Resurrection the Lord had opened the understanding of the disciples to understand the Scriptures (Luke xxiv. 45), and so ministered both to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and also to the company in the upper room, that the faith of each and all might rest on the written Word. We find Peter on this the first occasion which presented itself to him doing the same thing. And whilst pointing them to Joel to explain the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit, he reminded his hearers of those two Psalms, the 16th and 110th, which in the Hebrew, and in the ancient versions the LXX., the Syriac, and the Vulgate, are ascribed to David.

Are we quite in the dark when we write thus? Modern critics may insist on the post-exilic authorship of the latter. Those versed in Jewish learning in Peter's day apparently had no such thought. The way in which the Apostle quotes them leaves no doubt in the mind that the Jews had received them as from the pen of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. And if we believe that the son of Simon was speaking as filled with the Holy Ghost, which surely with Acts ii. 4 before us it would be hazardous to contest, his words are a witness of the testimony of the Spirit to the Davidic authorship of them both, as the words of the Lord in Mark xii. 36, 37, are decisive of that of the latter of these two. Further, the way of their introduction by Peter, and the use of them by Paul (Acts xiii. 35; Heb. i. 13, x. 13), are assertions, too plain to be ignored, of the Messianic application of them both. Thus the faith of Peter's audi-

ence, if his statements were received, would be established on the written Word. The one Psalm predicted the resurrection of Christ; the other had foretold His ascension. Both as to these events had received their fulfilment, Peter and those with him being eye-witnesses of the fulfilment of the former, and that which had just taken place being proof of the fulfilment of the latter.

Exercised Souls.—Had God really espoused the cause of the One they had crucified? Of His resurrection there was no doubt. The stupid story the soldiers were to tell could deceive no one, and doubtless was credited by no one. And during all the time that the Apostles were bearing testimony in Jerusalem to the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ, we never read of any one who contradicted it, though the ecclesiastical power had the greatest inducement to discredit it. And some of the influential members of the Sanhedrin had special reasons for controverting it. Yet no one did. No one could. The Lord risen then, raised by the glory of the Father, and at Jehovah's right hand on high, it needed no skilful advocate to point out the irresistible conclusion. God was for Him. Who then could prevail against Him? And though He had died, put to death by lawless men, His enemies would in a coming day have to own His supremacy, and be subject to Him, being made the footstool for His feet. Such was Peter's testimony, drawn from the Divine Word. All this dawning on the multitude for the first time, affected them deeply, and their question showed it: "Brethren, what shall we do?"

What a question to ask of Peter, and of the rest of the Apostles! But when men are in earnest about their souls, they turn to those that they believe can really help them. The high priest, the Pharisees, the scribes, none of them could minister to these anxious ones. To the Apostles they turned, willing to sit at the feet of His disciples whom they called the Nazoræan. Galilæans they were. But that did not

matter. Jewish prejudice against Galilee disappeared like foam on the water before the urgency of that need, which the Holy Ghost had by the words of Peter created in their souls.

The Answer.—Simple and full was the answer: "Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your * sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 38, 39). Repentance was called for. The death of Christ was no light matter. Judgment therefore of themselves, and of their ways, and a turning from them, was imperative. The Lord on the day that He rose commissioned His disciples to preach repentance. Peter here does it.

But more, Peter insisted on their being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for (or, unto) the remission of sins. Conscience-work and a public profession of Christ were required, if they would enjoy the blessings he held out to them; and on their receiving the Spirit, they would share in all that believers now possessed. Their children also could share in the same, and Gentiles as well, those afar off; for by this were such designated in opposition to the Jews, who as such were dispensationally nigh (Eph. ii. 17). The prophecy of Joel, and the reference here to those afar off, both intimated, what for a time even afterwards was evidently not really understood, that some from the Gentiles would be called to partake of the richest blessing that could be enjoyed upon earth, and in common with an election from Israel. Then solemnly and earnestly Peter exhorted them to save themselves from that untoward (or, crooked) generation. But here the historian has not reported all that was said. Many other words of a hortatory character uttered by Peter have found no place in inspired Scripture.

* "Your sins" we should read. It was a personal matter with each one.

Christian Baptism.—On baptism the Apostle laid stress —that baptism with water instituted by the Lord after His death and resurrection. Here for the first time is it mentioned as incumbent on disciples. What it expresses St. Paul has taught us—viz., burial with Christ unto death (Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12); hence it had no place, and could have had none, before the cross. It is the avowal of, and the way of entering on the path of, discipleship—the open declaration that, as baptised, people are in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter writes of it as saving those who carry out their Christian profession, as those in the ark were saved through the waters of the flood. It saves, he tells us (not by the external washing, the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer—or, demand *—of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter iii. 21). Both Apostles agree that it could have had no meaning before the cross. And both teach us that it was incumbent on all who desired to be enrolled as disciples after the cross. So Paul was baptised (Acts ix. 18). And writing years after, he classes himself amongst such (Rom. vi. 4). "*We* are buried," He said, "with Him by baptism unto death." Peter, who had no need of it, having been a disciple, and openly known as such before the cross, could write as he really did, "Saves *you*," not "*us*" (1 Peter iii. 21), distinguishing himself from those who had submitted to it. Now the difference between those who were disciples before the cross and those acknowledged as such after it is quite borne out by the Lord's command to the former to baptise others (Matt. xxviii. 19), without one hint being dropped of the need of their being baptised. There was no need at all for it in their case. There was no one who could have done it.

Ingathering.—An inward work, then, repentance, and a public profession by baptism in the name of Jesus Christ,

* The word here used by Peter, *eperotema* seems to mean the question asked; hence in the A.V. the answer.

were both insisted on, as needful in their case, ere grace in its fulness and the gift of the Holy Ghost would be bestowed on them. For as part of the nation which had crucified the Lord, and many of them certainly dwellers at Jerusalem, they must openly stand forth as disciples of Christ. A test this was indeed—disciples of the crucified One! Which of them, and how many, would respond to it? About three thousand heard and obeyed, and that same day submitted to the first Christian baptism that had ever taken place. Thus the company of believers began to increase, and now could be called Christians, because they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and so had the Spirit of Christ (Rom. viii. 9). Not, however, that they had as yet received that name. It was reserved for the population of Antioch to bestow it. But as partakers of the Spirit of Christ, they belonged to Christ, and so were really Christians. What an ingathering had been brought about! "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My [or, the] Father," the Lord had said (John xiv. 12). These words had that day commenced to be fulfilled.

A Picture.—Now follows in a few verses a picture of that time (Acts ii. 42-47). As for the converts, "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Earnest desire was manifested for apostolic teaching. And the whole company kept together in fellowship, united by the Spirit, however little as yet they may have been doctrinally instructed about it. We write thus guardedly, because, as will be seen, the picture is more of that which must have been seen from without, than an account of what was understood by those in the assembly. All might observe how they kept together, joining in religious exercises, at their meals remembering the Lord's death, and at other times engaging in prayer. Nor were outsiders unconcerned. Fear came upon all of them, and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles, doubtless keeping up the awe which the

miraculous powers of speech displayed at Pentecost had first excited. But what the wonders and signs were the historian has not related. Evidently the demonstrations of the Spirit were many and marked.

Now of the whole company we read. They were not afraid. They kept together; and conscious of their oneness, and perhaps, as has been suggested, expecting the near approach of the Lord's return, they had all things in common, those having possessions and goods disposing of them, to distribute to every one as he had need. Day by day they continued steadfastly with one accord in the Temple. The feast of Pentecost was over, but they were like people keeping high festival still. Daily and steadfastly "in the Temple, and breaking bread at home,* they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." What had God wrought? "And the Lord added together those that were being saved"—*i.e.*, a class of people so characterised, sharers in salvation. A question had been asked of the Lord in His life about that class, as the inquirer said, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" (Luke xiii. 23). Day by day it was now being seen how that class was increasing in numbers.

Praising God,—in this they were engaged. Joy filled their hearts. It was not, however, the joy of those just emancipated from slavery. Their fathers at the Red Sea had known what that was. Nor was it the joy of those who were tasting the fruits of victory. In the days of Joshua the people had experienced that. It was joy of another kind, and springing from another cause. It was the joy of souls now sharing in the love of God, partakers of Divine grace, brought into relationship with God as their Father, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and so in happy spiritual fellowship with one another. A joy this was that none of them had ever known before.

* So the A.V. in the margin, and the R.V. in the text, expressing thereby what the historian intended to convey.

A word now, ere closing this chapter, on that which had taken place.

What had taken place?—One had come whom the world could not see, and come to dwell in person on earth, and who had never dwelt here before. The Holy Ghost had come, and has remained on earth ever since. God in the person of the Spirit was really on earth. And He dwelt in a habitation wholly new—the House of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. iii. 15). Of old there had been, and still was, the assembly of the Lord, formed of a nation called out by God to be a witness for Him. In the midst of that nation He dwelt, from Sinai to the Babylonish captivity, and in a sanctuary erected in accordance with Divine revelation. Now afresh God dwelt on earth, but by the Spirit in the midst of a new assembly, called the assembly of the living God, and also the assembly or Church of Christ (Matt. xvi. 16-18). By the Spirit, we say, not meaning thereby merely a spiritual presence. God in the person of the Holy Ghost was and is really dwelling on earth. The Church or assembly is actually His House. It is also His Temple. And in relation to Christ it is not only His Church or assembly, but also His Body and His Bride. Of all this the world was ignorant, and probably at first believers knew very little about it. Subsequent apostolic revelation has, however, taught us of these things, and given us to understand what an epoch it really was, when the Holy Ghost, for the first time since man was upon earth, formed for Himself a habitation down here, composed of all who professedly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. What, then, must true Christians be to God? For now began to be formed that holy Temple, which still grows, composed of living stones, even of all true Christians. We can but just touch on all this here,* and only further

* Fuller remarks on the subject of the Church of God, if the reader desires them, will be found in a work by the author—*Simple Papers on the Church of God.*

remark, ere passing on, that, whilst much of what we have just noticed was outside Old Testament revelation, we have the distinction therein between the congregation of the Lord, or, as Stephen called it, the assembly or Church in the wilderness, and the assembly of the living God—we have the distinction, we say, plainly marked for us in Psalm xxii. 22 by the Holy Spirit's comment on that verse in Heb. ii. 12. We learn from this latter that the assembly in that verse of the Psalm is the Christian Church or assembly, distinguished from that mentioned in ver. 25 of that same Psalm. The congregation in the former verse is the Church. The great congregation in the latter verse is the congregation of Israel—*i.e.*, the nation (1 Kings viii. 65 ; 2 Chron. vii. 8).

III.

A MIRACLE AND ATTEMPTED INTIMIDATION.

ACTS III.—IV. 31.

MANY wonders and signs Luke has told us were done by the Apostles (Acts ii. 43). As yet we have had no detailed account of any. He will, however, now proceed to tell us of one, and which evidently was regarded as, and surely was, a most remarkable one. And as we have had depicted the happiness of the company, and its growth, we are shortly to learn of the first attempt to intimidate the leaders of the movement by the arrest of Peter and John.

The Ninth Hour.—Frequenting the Temple daily, the Apostles were found in its courts at the time of public prayer. To one of these occasions our attention is now to be directed by the historian, but he fixes not the date of it. On a certain day Peter and John were going up, as we should translate, into the Temple at the hour of prayer. Belonging to what we may call the inner circle of the Apostles, these two are frequently found together. To them was entrusted by the Lord the service of making ready the upper room for the last paschal supper (Luke xxii. 8). Together they were on the morning of the Resurrection, when Mary made known that the tomb was empty; and together they ran to the sepulchre, to find that her report was correct (John xx. 2-8). Together, too, they went at the request of the rest to visit the new converts in Samaria (Acts viii.). Now, on the afternoon to which Luke refers, they were going up to the Temple *together*.

For though that word should be left out of the narrative, it is plain that they were together that day. It was at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer, about 3 p.m., when the evening burnt offering was offered up in the court, and incense was burnt on the golden altar within.

Hallowed was that hour, and connected with memories of the past. At that time, though far from God's altar at Jerusalem, Elijah, having repaired the altar of the Lord on Mount Carmel, arranged the bullock for the sacrifice, and supplicated the Lord to consume it by fire from heaven. And as the incense, as we may believe, was perfuming the holy place at Jerusalem, God responded to His servant at Carmel by sending the fire from on high, the token that He was the true God (1 Kings xviii. 38). At that same hour, centuries later, when Daniel, a captive in Babylon, was in prayer, Gabriel touched him, announcing the welcome news that his prayer was heard, and revealing to him the prophecy of the seventy weeks, the last part of which has yet to come (Dan. ix. 21). At that same hour it was that the Lord, of whose coming and death Gabriel had told the prophet, uttered on the cross that solemn cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and then shortly after expired. Now, at that same hour of the day, Peter and John, entering the Temple, were to witness for the crucified One, and to manifest before all there assembled the power of His name.

A Miracle.—As they were going up a lame man was being carried, to be laid at the gate of the Temple called Beautiful,* to solicit alms. He lived, it would seem, on the charity of the public, extended to him as they entered

* It is questioned where this gate was. Of one especially beautiful Josephus writes, calling it the Corinthian gate, because covered with Corinthian brass. He writes (*Wars of the Jews*, V. v. 3): "There was one gate that was without [the inward court of] the holy house, which was of Corinthian brass, and greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold. . . . The magnitudes

the sacred precincts. Forty years old was he now, and daily was he carried and laid down at that gate. Had he ever seen the Lord passing in or out? Certainly, if he had, healing power had not been exercised on his behalf. Every cripple, every sick one, did not receive benefit from Him. Witness the great multitude of sick folk at the Pool of Bethesda, waiting there on the day that the impotent man was cured. Now, however, the hour in the counsels of God had arrived for this one to be made whole. Seeing Peter and John, he asked an alms. It was his wonted request. It was all he asked, and evidently all he expected (Acts iii. 5). A little *temporal* relief he craved. He was, however, to get *healing*. He had been indebted to the kindness and support of others to get there, and was actually at the moment being carried, an evidence of his helplessness, when, in answer to his petition for an alms, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazoræan walk" (iii. 6). We should here omit "rise up." The omission makes it more graphic. He was to walk.

Lame from his mother's womb, he had never walked. His feet and ankle bones had never borne the weight of his body. Walk! How could he? Peter showed him that his words were no vain words. For he took him by the right hand, and raised him up, and strength, such as he had never known, he received at once. With the agility of one who had always had the use of his limbs, he *leaped* up. The weight of his body these limbs, so powerless for forty years, now perfectly sustained. He *stood*. And the activity proper to man was his in common with others

of the other gates were equal one to another; but that over the Corinthian gate, which opened on the east over-against the gate of the holy house itself, was much larger; for its height was fifty cubits; and its doors were forty cubits; and it was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon them than the other." From his description one would suppose this was the gate.

around. He *began to walk*, as we should translate. No arm even to lean on did he need. No crutch to support him was in requisition. With no tottering gait did he move. Carried as he had been to the precincts of the Temple, he entered the Beautiful gate of it a sound man, walking and leaping and praising God. In open day this occurred. In the most public place in the city, in the presence of a multitude about probably to pass through that Beautiful gate to engage in prayer, the man formerly lame, and well known to be such, passed in with the crowd, demonstrating to all beholders his new powers, for he walked, and manifesting his joy, for he was praising God. He held Peter and John, it is true, but not to support himself. His benefactors he deemed them, and so naturally clung to them.

Peter's Address.—Wonder and amazement filled the people when they saw the man walking, and they ran together unto the Apostles in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering (ver. 11). This porch, or portico, was a relic, it is said, of Solomon's work, which had escaped destruction till then.* In this same porch the Lord was walking when questioned by the Jews as to whether He was the Christ (John x. 23). In this same place, evidently one of concourse, the Apostles were found later on (Acts v. 12), before they were beaten by order of the Sanhedrin. To the assembled crowd Peter now addressed himself. In the previous chapter his audience of course was a mixed one, composed not only of native but of many foreign Jews speaking various languages, because collected from different countries upon earth. On this occasion, the feast of Pente-

* To this porch Josephus refers. "These," he writes, [eastern] "cloisters belonged to the outer court, and were situated in a deep valley, and had walls that reached four hundred cubits [in length], and were built of square and very white stones, the length of each of which stones was twenty cubits, and their height six cubits. This was the work of King Solomon, who first of all built the entire Temple" (Josephus, *Ant.*, XX. ix. 7).

cost being over, we may conclude that the foreign element, of which there was always some in Jerusalem (vi. 9), was reduced to its normal proportions. "Ye men of Israel," he began, "why marvel ye at this?" (referring probably to that which is stated in ver. 9); "or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness [rather, godliness] we had made this man to walk?" (iii. 12). No credit would they take to themselves, nor allow the people for one moment to think of them as something extraordinary. How different was this from Simon Magus, who, exercising Satanic power, gave himself out to be some great one (viii. 9). The natural man loves to exalt himself. The Apostles would give all the glory to God, and to His servant Christ Jesus. The miracle was undoubted. Peter distinctly admits it. But the power by which it had been accomplished was Divine.

The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, was working still in their midst, but now for the glory of His servant Jesus. Bold indeed is Peter. In the Temple court he affirmed that Jesus, the rejected and crucified One, was Jehovah's servant.* Of One so called Isaiah had written (xlii. 1). Of that same One Peter here spoke. Delivered by the people to Pilate (as he reminds them), that Roman governor was desirous to release Him, and was only prevented by the clamorous importunity of the rulers and people. They denied before Pilate their true Messiah. The holy One and the righteous One they denied. They asked for a murderer to be given them. They killed the Prince (or, Originator) of life.† A heavy indictment indeed! Yet the simple truth. And with the facts still fresh in the memory of them all, no one did, no one could, impugn the correctness of the accusation. Man's work had been

* "Servant" he calls him, *Pais*; not Son, *Hyos*.

† The Greek word *archēgos* is variously translated, "Prince," "Author," "Originator." It is used in the New Testament here, and elsewhere, only of the Lord (Acts v. 31; Heb. ii. 10, xii. 2).

like Cain's—to put the righteous One to death. God's power, however, had been displayed in raising Him from the dead. And now He had glorified Him; and in His name, and by faith in His name, that miracle had been wrought, and that man healed.

A crime, a murder, had taken place, and the people had consented to it, and had insisted on it. But done as it was by rulers and people through ignorance, Peter assured them that the door for repentance was still open. Great, too, as the crime was, it had been foreseen and predicted. "God before had showed by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ [so Peter said] should suffer." That He had fulfilled. "His Christ," then, it was whom they had crucified. What a crime that was! Was all lost? No, but deferred. And now it rested on the repentance of the people as to when the Messianic blessing, which for ages had been expected, should really be enjoyed. "Repent ye therefore," continued the Apostle to his audience, "and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for [not, preached unto] you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began." We have followed the Revised Version rather than the Authorised Version in citing this passage, because there are several variations in the text consequent on better readings, and one very important mistranslation is by the former corrected, which seems to have originated with the Vulgate. The times of refreshing depend on, and are a consequence of, the repentance of the people. This the Authorised Version fails to exhibit. The Christ was now on high, and would remain there, till repentance working in the people, God should send Him back. To that Deut. xxx. 1-10. looks forward as well as other Scriptures.

To the future they must therefore turn. There was, however, a word for them in the present. He who had been in their midst was really the Prophet like unto Moses, to whom all were to hearken. Present responsibility then rested on them whilst awaiting the future. For if that Prophet had come, and Jesus Christ was that Prophet, it was incumbent on all men to hearken to Him, lest judgment should overtake the rebellious (Acts iii. 22, 23). Further, they were the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with their fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." Hence to them first God, having raised up His servant [Jesus should be here omitted], sent Him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from their iniquities. A caution may here be needed as to what that raising up refers. It is clearly not the Resurrection that is pointed to, but the Lord's first coming to earth, in accordance with the words just quoted from Deut. xviii. 18: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up," etc.

So familiar are we with this history, that we can scarce take in the full effect on the people of that which had been seen or heard. In the very porch where the Jews had challenged the Lord for proofs of His Messiahship, Peter announced that the man had been healed in the name of Jesus the Nazoræan. In the precincts of Jehovah's house, who never gave His glory to another, a miracle had been wrought avowedly in the name of Him whom the Sanhedrin had not long before adjudged to be a blasphemer, and worthy of death. The controversy about His claim to be a Divine Person was more than settled, but in a way the Jews never expected. God had glorified His servant the Nazoræan, in allowing a miracle to be wrought in His own house in the latter's name. Jesus Christ, the Nazoræan, was the only one of whom Peter had spoken to the lame man. If, then, His name, without the mention of the God of Abraham, etc., was powerful in the sacred precincts, the crucified One

must be more than a mere man. And God, by what had taken place, clearly owned Him as His fellow. A miracle wrought elsewhere would have been a wonderful event; but wrought only in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the court of Jehovah's house, was evidence which could not be rebutted of the truth of the Lord's claim, when on earth, to be equal with God. No marvel, then, is it, that out of the many wonders and signs done at that early time by the Apostles this one has been detailed at length, and is the only one of that date which Luke has been directed to record. No miracle could there be to show in a plainer way the divinity of Him whom the nation had put to death.

An Arrest.—That it was a miracle the multitude firmly believed; and those who had the greatest interest in denying it, the high priest and all with him, found themselves confronted with a fact to which they were unable to shut their eyes. It was established in a manner that defied contradiction, and effectually refuted any suggestion of collusion. The man once lame, and well known to have been such from His birth, was walking, and had entered the Temple on his own legs. Nor was that a mere spasmodic effort, for the power acquired he was still using. He who had entered the Temple would shortly appear before the high priest and the company sitting with him. No one denied it. No one attempted to deny it. They were not able, as the historian states, to say anything against it (iv. 14). Moderns have tried to explain it away. Contemporaries attested, however unwillingly, the truth of it. But measures, it was felt, must be taken to stop the movement. Those interested in checking it now interfered. Peter and John were teaching the people, a duty which belonged specially to the priests. They boldly proclaimed the Lord's resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees felt that one of their pet tenets was touched. So "the priests, and the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees, came

upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (iv. 1, 2). In the Lord's life the Pharisees were His great opponents. The Sadducees seem for the most part to have let Him alone. But the truth of His resurrection stirred them up, and in the Acts we find them active against the Apostles (v. 17, xxiii. 6-8). Resurrection *of* the dead the Pharisees held. The Sadducees, who denied resurrection, could nevertheless sit in the council with them. But resurrection *from* the dead, a fact actually accomplished, brought out their antagonism to the truth all the stronger. If apostolic preaching was true, resurrection could no longer be denied. Peter and John then must be arrested. Their liberty indeed might be curtailed. Power could effect that; and it did. Yet was the work to be stopped? Many who had heard them believed; and the men—for of the males only is the number stated—now reached to five thousand. What the whole assembly numbered, when the women were reckoned in, is left unstated.

Before the Council.—The two Apostles, kept in ward for the night, for it was evening when they were arrested, were to be brought before the council on the morrow. These two Galilæan fishermen were for the first time placed in the position of defendants before the leading people of their nation. Annas, the high priest,* and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred

* The high-priestly dignity was conferred on different persons by the Roman government. Annas had been deposed, and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, appointed in his place. That Annas had authority morally, though not actually, the Lord's examination before him (John xviii.) indicates. He may therefore still have been called high priest (see Luke iii. 2), as having once filled the pontifical office. Sure we are that Luke is writing of that which he had searched out. So if we cannot explain the reference here to Annas as high priest, it is because there is something with which we are unacquainted. Considering, too, how many things have been cleared up in our day previously unexplainable, it is wiser for us to confess our ignorance,

of the high priest, with the rulers, elders, and scribes, were gathered together in Jerusalem. The sight of that assembly might naturally have overawed the prisoners. And perhaps it was intended by such an array to intimidate them. But did it? Their position, though to them a new one, had been foreseen by the Lord, who had warned them that they would be brought before kings and rulers for His sake. He, too, had encouraged them by the promise of the Holy Ghost to teach them what they should then say. His words were verified as to their standing before rulers. Would His promise also be fulfilled? We shall see.

Before Annas, and before Caiaphas, the Lord had stood, and was formally adjudged by the latter to have been a blasphemer. What must have been the feelings of these men as they looked on the two disciples, and were aware of the miracle wrought in the name of Jesus Christ? Had they stamped out the movement? It had taken new life since its Founder's death. And these two humble men, questioned as to the power and the name in which they had healed the man, Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, now answered without hesitation. The Lord's promise to His disciples was indeed fulfilled.

We give the Apostle's reply in the words of the Revised Version: "Ye rulers of the people, and elders, If we

and to wait for fuller light, than to charge the historian with ignorance, till we are quite sure that we are better informed than he was. Of John and Alexander nothing definite seems known. Lightfoot identifies the former with Rabbi Johanan Ben Zaccai. Grotius says he was known to rabbinical writers as "John the priest." Alexander has been identified by some as the brother of Philo Judæus. The names of the two defendants are household words, and their service is imperishably preserved in the inspired writings. The history of John and Alexander, well known at the time, has sunk into almost oblivion. Great ones of earth are often well-nigh forgotten, when servants of God of their day are remembered and had in honour.

this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth [or, the Nazoræan], whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (iv. 8-12).

Such a bold reply was probably anything but expected. It would seem to have taken them very much by surprise. Unlearned and ignorant men they thought these two. Not understanding that they were, as we might say, graduates in a school to which these doctors were strangers, they marvelled at them, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And the man which was healed being present with them, they could say nothing against it. Sadducees as they were, the miraculous cure they could not gainsay, though done in the name of One whom, according to their tenets, they could only regard as a dead and non-existent man.

Twice already have we had addresses by Peter. In both, as in this one, the resurrection of the Lord is a prominent feature. In each, too, some Old Testament scripture prophetic of Christ is adduced. So by degrees truth about Him is unfolded; and we learn in these early chapters of the Acts of different lights in which He was presented. On the day of Pentecost Peter called attention to the predictions by David of his death, resurrection, and ascension, and the consequences deducible—that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. In Solomon's porch Peter told his hearers that He was the Prophet like unto Moses, of whom that lawgiver had written. And now before the council he declared that the Lord was the stone

referred to in Psalm cxviii. One marked difference, however, has to be noticed in these addresses. To the people the Apostle offers forgiveness and full blessing if they repented. To the rulers he does not here mention repentance, contenting himself with telling them that in none other name was there salvation, than in the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified. And though on another occasion (Acts v. 31) he tells the rulers that God has exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, thus leaving them without excuse for continuing in their opposition to the truth, there is no pressing on them, as there was on the people, to avail themselves of present grace and salvation. It was indeed for them as for others, if they would; but not in their capacity of rulers. They must come into it simply as penitents.

Deliberation.—The council had heard the defence. Deliberation next followed, the Apostles having been first commanded to go outside, till the decision should be communicated. But we, privileged, as it were, to be present at their deliberation, know what passed within the council chamber. The arrest had been evidently a great mistake, for they found that they could do nothing to the Apostles. The judicial power can never afford rashly to take up a case, and then to find it must drop it. Such a course necessarily tends to bring itself into disrepute and discredit before men. Yet what had they done? They had kept two men in ward for a whole night for a good deed done to an impotent man! That was the light in which Peter put it, and against which they could urge nothing. A semblance of authority must, however, be maintained; so they decided to threaten them. But why threaten people who admittedly had only done a good deed? Foolish indeed did these doctors and rulers appear.

The Decision.—In solemn form, doubtless, the Apostles were called in to hear the sentence of the court. They

charged them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus (iv. 18). Vain attempt on the part of Annas, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and all the kindred of the high priest! Submission to that order on the part of the Apostles, which perhaps they had expected, they learned at once was refused. And now Peter and John together speak (the former only had addressed the council before), and distinctly refuse compliance with their demand, but base refusal on grounds which none could challenge: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (19, 20). Again and still more did the rulers threaten them, but "let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done" (21).

Thus ended the first conflict with the ecclesiastical power. From it the council did not come off victorious. The Apostles were not intimidated by the high priests' presence, nor did they fear their threats. The rulers, however, feared the populace. What had been gained? The miracle had been the more extensively advertised, and the highest ecclesiastical authority in the land had set its seal to its reality. The enemy was this time completely foiled. The Galilæan fishermen, ignorant and unlearned men, as they regarded them, had braved the anger of the council, which confessed itself powerless to punish them.

Their own Company.—Permitted, as it were, as we have been to be present at the deliberation of the council, we are now permitted to be present in the same way with the apostolic company in the place where they were assembled. The two rejoining the rest, repeated all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them. Did any heart in the company quail? Did any question the propriety of the boldness of the two? All, we learn, were of one accord, and with one voice they lifted up their

hearts unitedly in prayer to God as the Lord, the Adon or Adonai of the Old Testament—Luke probably translating into Greek what they uttered in Aramaic, and so using the term for Lord, *Despotes*, found in the Septuagint at times * as the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *Adon* or *Adonai*. To Him, the Lord and the Creator, they turned, and quoted the opening clauses of the second Psalm, which they, divinely taught, understood had begun now to receive its fulfilment. The conflict of which it speaks had commenced with the Lord's condemnation and crucifixion. The Psalm is distinctly prophetic. To no king of old could it refer in any measure of fulness. Of the Lord Jesus, and of God's counsels about Him, and the advice to people with reference to Him (12) the Psalm treats. For the conflict then begun will only end in the final victory and supremacy of that Son, Jehovah's Anointed.

Those gathered together in prayer recognised then the character of the times, and asked for that which they required. What was that? Shelter from persecution? Power to crush their enemies? No. But that with all boldness they might speak the Word, God stretching forth His hand, not to shield them, but to heal others, and that signs and wonders might be done in the name of His holy servant Jesus. What a picture is presented! The whole company in prayer before God, asking for boldness to speak, and looking up for Him to work in the name of His holy Servant! Were they ignorant of what that might involve? Assuredly not. Bold had been Peter and John before the council. Was it bravado assumed for the occasion? We see here that it was not. And we must be impressed with the intense earnestness of them all, who, whilst realising the gravity of their position, were undismayed by the threats uttered, and by the power that might be called out against them.

* Once only, Prov. xxix. 25, is *Despotes* used in the Septuagint to express Jehovah.

The Answer.—They had prayed. They were heard, and speedily answered. The place was shaken "where they were assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness" (Acts iv. 31). "They were filled with the Spirit"—a term used for the most part of some special act on the part of God, making the vessel full for the time being of the Spirit, and which should be distinguished from the phrase "full of the Spirit."

To fresh attempts to mar and to stop the work are we next introduced.

IV.

CORRUPTION AND PERSECUTION.

ACTS IV. 32—V. 42.

CHRISTIAN love continued unimpaired. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any one that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts iv. 32). In thought and feeling, as well as in affection, they were fully united, and they continued to give proof of this, in that they still had all things common. Such was the picture which the Christian community presented to an observer. Happiness, confidence, and love reigned among them.

The Resurrection.—An aggressive work, however, went on at the same time. "With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (33). To His resurrection the earnest attention of those outside was especially called. It was one of the great subjects of early apostolic preaching (i. 22, ii. 24-32, iii. 15, iv. 2-10, v. 30). Much hangs on it. If the Lord is risen, it is because *God* has raised Him from the dead, and has thus openly espoused His cause. He is risen, not like Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and others, to return to corruption, but never again to die (Acts xiii. 34). Death has no more dominion over Him (Rom. vi. 9). He is alive, then, for ever—the living One (Rev. i. 18). Moreover, He was raised, because it was not possible that He should be holden of death (Acts ii. 24). For He was holy and righteous,

and His resurrection proclaims that. Decisive proof then of what He was, His resurrection also bears on the future of all who die. For He is become the first-fruits of them that are asleep, and the witness and pledge that all will be made alive (1 Cor. xv. 20-22). This truth bears, too, on the fact of a coming judgment, the certainty of which is thereby placed beyond contradiction, the day being appointed, and the risen One being marked out as the future Judge (Acts xvii. 31). All therefore are concerned in consequences which flow from it. Saints, too, have a special interest in it, because it demonstrates God's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ, and assures all of them that He, delivered for their offences, was raised for their justification (Rom. iv. 25).

To preach, then, the resurrection of Christ was to convict the Jews of sin in putting Him to death, and to announce the defeat by God of all their plans, stripping off at the same time that cloak of religious zeal in which they had endeavoured to enwrap their conduct. It left them without excuse, whilst it pointed to the ground on which forgiveness of sins was preached—viz., God's acceptance of the sacrifice. "With great power," therefore, we read, "gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all"—*i.e.*, the Christian community.

A Common Fund.—This grace was exemplified in contributions to the common fund. Poverty characterised many of the saints at Jerusalem. More than once alms were brought to them from afar (Acts xi. 29, 30, xxiv. 17). Want at this time would have been felt by many had these contributions failed. But instead, none among them lacked (iv. 34); and each in need received, and that daily (vi. 1), out of the *common* fund. Of the formation of this fund we have already read (ii. 45). How it was replenished the historian here informs us. Free offerings, the produce of sales of property, swelled the balance of this Christian exchequer.

Barnabas.—Of many who contributed to it we know

nothing. But of two different parties we are now to read: that of Barnabas, who gave up all the proceeds of the sale of his land; and that of Ananias and Sapphira his wife, who surreptitiously kept back part of theirs. Barnabas was a Levite. His own name was Joseph; * but he received the surname, or appellation, of Barnabas in consequence of the character of his ministry, as an exhorter. Evidently that was his special gift (xi. 23). And his surname, which means son of *exhortation*, rather than consolation, distinctly implies it. Here for the first time he appears on the scene, destined afterwards to play for a time no unimportant part in the great work of evangelising the heathen. A Levite, of the island of Cyprus, and therefore a Hellenistic Jew, he, in common with Paul, also one of that class by birth, was called out by name to commence the great missionary work in Asia Minor (xiii. 2). At present all that we learn of him is that he sold his field—for Levites could possess land of their own—and of his own free will he laid the price of it at the Apostles' feet.

Corruption.—To the other instance of imparting to the common fund we are now to be directed. The happy and prosperous condition of the assembly could not but attract the attention of one unseen by mortal eye, yet ever ready to devise plans to mar, if possible, the work of God. The happiness of our first parents, and their continued enjoyment of the garden of pleasure, or delight (as the Hebrew word Eden means), was not unnoticed by the devil, and he succeeded—for God allowed it—in breaking in upon the one, and causing the termination of the other. The man became the accuser of the woman, and both were driven out of Paradise, with the hope, however, of the woman's seed to appear, who should bruise the serpent's head. That One had appeared. But crucified by His creatures, who were led on to that by the prince of this world, He had left earth, had ascended to heaven, and had now sent the Holy Ghost

* So the best authorities read.

from the Father. In consequence there was inaugurated a work on earth such as had never been known before. Power was displayed, and a ministry was in active exercise, which bowed hearts like bulrushes, and steadily increased the number of the adherents of the new faith. To stop that work if possible, or to mar it, if it could not be wholly checked, was the design of Satan. Intimidation had been tried, but without effect. Other means must therefore be resorted to. Nor was the enemy sparing in his attempts. Corruption working from within should be attempted, and persecution from without, and even martyrdom should follow.

For the former plan to be carried out—that of corrupting —it was needful to find some within who could be worked on by cupidity, in company with the desire of earning a title before men for large-hearted liberality. For since some had been found who generously and honestly parted with their possessions for the benefit of their poorer brethren, the effort to introduce corruption within the assembly should be masked under the semblance of truthfulness, and of as full a surrender of earthly possessions. Instruments were forthcoming, and quickly utilised, in the persons of Ananias and Sapphira his wife. Probably—for there is nothing to indicate the contrary—they were home-born Jews, natives of the Holy Land.

A possession they sold. Its extent or its locality is alike unknown to us. We know it was land (v. 3-8), but its realised value, or the amount kept back, these details Luke has not supplied. The two, the husband and wife, were agreed in this act. And Ananias went to the Apostles and laid at their feet a certain part of the sum they had received, whilst professing to bring thither the whole of it. No human witness appeared against them. Very likely the purchaser was a Jew, who had no interest in exposing them. The plan was in their eyes skilfully laid; and seemingly it was being successfully carried out. A character

they would earn for liberality as good as that obtained by Joseph the Levite, who was born in Cyprus. Deceit and lying the enemy doubtless hoped would thus get a footing in the assembly; and the leaven working, the Spirit would be grieved, and God must necessarily come in as a Judge, as He had in Eden in the day of the Fall. Such, probably, was the devil's hope. He had succeeded in Eden: would he succeed at Jerusalem? The devil had one object. Ananias and Sapphira, thinking only of themselves, had another. All seemed going on prosperously for him and them, till the man, having brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet, Peter's unexpected attack exposed the whole plot, and confounded the machinations of Satan.

Ananias convicted.—Direct and prompt was the Apostle's challenge. "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (v. 3, 4). Ananias appears to have been the instigator in this matter; his wife, we are told, was privy to it (2). In Eden the serpent approached the woman. On this occasion he first turned to the man. And Peter addressed him in a way evidently unlooked for. In the place of accepting the gift and commending him, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" etc., were the first words of the solemn questions with which he met him. The Apostle, be it observed, speaks to him as professedly a Christian, and holding him responsible for yielding to the temptation (1 Peter v. 8, 9). Now the sin was great, far more heinous than he or others might suppose. For in the assembly of Christians, and professedly a member of it, he was in the company of those amongst whom the Holy Ghost dwelt on earth. He had therefore lied to Him in keeping back part of the price of the land when professing to have

given up all of it. He might think he had lied only to man. He had really lied to God. And no extenuating circumstances could he plead. For no one demanded that sacrifice of him. No one could force the sale of his property. No one could claim that the price realised should be paid into the relief fund. He was perfectly free to retain the land or to sell it, and when sold he had perfect power over the disposal of its money value. Community of goods, it was thus authoritatively declared, was by no means obligatory. Freedom there was for any to give. Freedom, too, for any to retain their possessions, whether of land or of money, only, whatever was done, was to be done in uprightness. And on this, the first example, we believe, of the contrary, summary and solemn judgment had to be awarded. Ananias, struck dumb, it would seem, for he said not a word, immediately fell down dead, and was carried out for burial. How real and how solemn a truth is that of the Spirit's personal presence in the assembly!

Sapphira.—On all present great fear came. Yet for a few hours the matter could not have been noised abroad; for Sapphira, his wife, came in about three hours after, ignorant of that which had taken place. Taxed by Peter, she stood to that to which Ananias and she had agreed. Judgment was speedily pronounced. "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." Adam and Eve were sentenced on the day of their fall, and from it there lay no appeal. Ananias and Sapphira were sentenced, so far as this world is concerned, on the day of their deceit, and that solemn sentence was immediately carried out. God's governmental dealing was displayed in the sentence passed on Adam and Eve. His governmental dealing was also displayed in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. The entrance of sin into the world brought death in its train. The first attempt to introduce corruption into the assembly

was visibly stamped out, as the bodies of the offenders were carried out for burial. There is a sin unto death (1 John v. 16). Such is here exemplified.

A Result.—On Christians, and on men in the world, an effect was produced. "Great fear came upon all the Church,* and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts v. 11-14). All were, for the time at least, solemnised. Hypocrisy received a warning and a check. Who not real would dare to join the company of those who had such power, and had exercised it? Nevertheless, the work of God went on. This attempt of the enemy to mar it completely failed. The Spirit was working in power as much as ever. Tokens of this in the signs and wonders wrought by the Apostles the crowd could take knowledge of, whilst the Word dealt with souls, so that the number of true believers greatly increased—multitudes, both of men and women, being added to the Christian community. The blessed effect of ministry in the Word—for many we learn became believers (14)—is just mentioned; but no notes of any Apostle's discourse at this time have been preserved.

Not so, however, is it with the signs and wonders. Of these the historian has given us a sample. Healing power was richly displayed; for the streets became somewhat like the wards of a hospital, seeing that the sick were carried

* Here for the first time really is the *Church*, or *assembly*, mentioned. That which did not exist on earth when the Lord was here is now recognised as having been formed. The assembly of Christ, the Church of the living God, was in existence, and was quite distinct from the congregation of the Lord of the Old Testament Scriptures. We say *really mentioned*, for the reader may remember that "the Church" should be omitted in ii. 47. Between Matt. xviii. and Acts v. the term never occurs.

out into them, and laid upon beds and couches, waiting not for medical consultation over their case, but that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them. Healing they looked for. Healing, we understand, they got. God, who had acted in that solemn way in government, striking down those two offenders by death—God was acting in this blessed way, bestowing healing on diseased bodies, and communicating strength to enfeebled frames. Awe had fallen upon all, as they heard of the power of death which had been in exercise through Peter. Gladness now must surely have filled many a heart, as that Apostle's shadow falling on them, disease and infirmity departed from them. Are we not reminded at this juncture, as well as at a later time, of the Lord's words in John xiv. 12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father"? The effect of Peter's first sermon illustrated this. The beneficial results of his overshadowing sick ones, as well as the handkerchiefs brought from Paul's body (Acts xix. 11, 12), confirm it. Nor was blessing confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Multitudes came from the cities round with sick folk, and those under demoniacal thraldom received what was wanted. Every one was healed. Never before, surely, had such sights been witnessed in Jerusalem and in its environs!—the streets crowded with sufferers craving relief; the roads converging on the capital peopled with afflicted ones on their way to get healing. How often since has one suffering much in body been taken many miles, only to learn at the end that there was no cure to be looked for, or even temporary relief to be procured! At this time it was not relief that was administered; it was healing that was dispensed. The God of all grace was working on hearts. The Father of mercies was displaying His compassion in healing the sick, and delivering those vexed with unclean spirits.

Renewed Efforts.—Utterly impossible the ecclesiastical

authorities felt that such things should be permitted to go on. And now they had, as they thought, a legal right to interpose, and to put the movement down. The Apostles were acting in open defiance of the command of the Sanhedrin, and were evidently enlisting more than ever the populace on their side by the miracles wrought and the healing dispensed. Constituted authority could not be thus bearded with impunity in the metropolis of Judaism. A blow must be struck, which should be at once bold and effective, that all might see that the authorities were not afraid to touch those whom the people, now more than ever, magnified. So the high priest and all that were with him, which was the sect of the Sadducees, arrested the Twelve and put them all in prison. On the previous occasion the priests and the captain of the Temple—*i.e.*, the Temple guard—arrested Peter and John, who were in Solomon's porch (iv. 1). They had jurisdiction within its precincts, and so interfered. But now it was the Sanhedrin—at least the Sadducean members of it, with the high priest at their head—which had power over matters ecclesiastical in connection with the members of the nation,—a power conferred on the high priest by Julius Cæsar prior to the birth of Christ.*

Divine Interposition.—At what hour the arrest took place is not recorded; but as the council could only legally sit by day, the examination of the Apostles was deferred till the following morning. So to the common prison were they all consigned, the doors of which were not only safely secured, but keepers stood before them likewise. Impossible, their captors considered, that they should escape during the

* The terms of this part of Cæsar's decree, as given by Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV. x. 2, are: "And if at any time hereafter there arise any questions about the Jewish customs, I will that he [*i.e.*, Hyrcanus and his successors] determine the same." This decree, so important to the Jews, was by command of Julius Cæsar to "be openly proposed in a table of brass, both in Greek and in Latin."

night. Darkness now settled on the city; but the eye of the Lord was on that public prison, and on His servants therein confined; and ere morning came an angel had opened the doors and had brought them out, and commanded them to go into the Temple and to speak to the people "all the words of this life." At about daybreak they began to carry out their commission without fear of any possible consequences; and when the council was assembling to try them, they were preaching to the people in the Temple, though as yet the council was unaware of that. Sending, however, officers to the prison to summon them, it was discovered that the prison was empty, and the prisoners had escaped. But when and how, none of the guard could say, nor could the officers sent to bring the prisoners suggest. All seemed secure outside the prison; the keepers were there, and the doors were shut. None of the guard had seen them opened, and none of them entertained the slightest suspicion that they were guarding an empty gaol! Angelic power, however, could, and did, open the doors without arousing the keepers. For when God pleases He can cause a deep sleep to fall on men—supernatural slumber, which keeps its subjects in its embrace, till the Almighty permits them to shake it off. It may very probably have been thus in this case.

Before the Council.—Returning without the prisoners, the officers had to tell the council that their errand had proved abortive. All seemed, they said, secure without, but the prisoners were not within, nor could they tell whither they had gone—no trace of them was left. It was no ordinary escape from custody, nor was there any proof of treachery in the guard. Perplexity filled the minds of the authorities, and they appeared thoroughly baffled, till word was brought that the Apostles were in the Temple, very actively propagating their doctrine. Sending thither for them, they were brought, but without violence, the officers fearing the people; and now confronting the council,

they heard what the high priest had to say against them. "We straitly charged you"—so we should read—"that ye should not teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (v. 28). Disobedience to the ecclesiastical authority was the offence put in the foreground, whilst evidence of a short memory was manifested in the concluding words of the high priest. The attempt to make the Apostles transgressors was specious, but ineffectual. The Pharisaic section of the council evidently laid no stress on that. And as for the charge of "intending to bring this man's blood on us," it was foolish in the extreme. For had not the chief priests and scribes in answer to Pilate cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children"? (Matt. xxvii. 25). They then and there accepted the responsibility of putting the Lord to death.

Weak indeed was this attempt to put the Apostles in the wrong. They knew full well the resolute reply of Peter and John, when before the council on the previous occasion, and the grounds on which they then based their refusal to bow to the command of their judges. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 19, 20). Threaten they might, as they did; but there was One whom Peter and John feared far more than the council, and hence they had refused compliance with their former demand.

And now, in answer to the high priest, Peter, a second time the spokesman, and here for all his colleagues, thus delivered himself: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Did the rulers raise a question of disobedience of the authorities? There was another authority greater than them—even God. If these two are in conflict, God must be obeyed and human authorities be disregarded. That question simply settled, the charge of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine was next taken up. How could they help

that, considering what God had done, and was doing by the presence of the Holy Ghost. So Peter proceeded: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are * witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (v. 29-32). The offence was repeated, and the guilt of the rulers in crucifying the Lord was reaffirmed to their face. Their anger was therefore kindled. Cut to the heart, they now took counsel to slay them. No threats, nor imposing display of authority, could stop the mouths of their prisoners. Death only could close them, and rid them of such persistent accusers. To death they wished to consign them. At this juncture, however, a hindrance was discovered. The council must condemn them. Could the council be persuaded to do it? Could they secure a unanimous verdict against the Apostles, as they had against the Lord? The two rival factions, at one as to the Lord's condemnation, were not at one on this occasion. And Gamaliel, the spokesman here of the Pharisees, interposed, and turned the Sadducean section from their murderous intent.

Gamaliel.—The bitterest enemies of the Lord when in life were the Pharisees. His life, His teaching, condemned their practices, and they resented that. The bitterest enemies to the Apostles in Jerusalem after the Cross were the Sadducees (iv. 1, v. 17, xxiii. 6-9). The doctrine of the Resurrection, the truth of it in the Lord's case, controverted their peculiar tenets; so they desired to put the Apostles down, and to silence them in one way or another. With that, however, the Pharisees had no sympathy; and by their spokesman Gamaliel, a man held in reputation among the Jews, advice was now to be tendered, the wisdom

* "His" before "witnesses," and "also" before "the Holy Ghost," should be omitted.

of which none of the opposite party could gainsay. Of Gamaliel we read again later on, learning there that the Apostle Paul had been in his earlier days one of his pupils; or, as he himself describes it, "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel" (xxii. 3). This the Apostle Paul adduced in proof of his former Pharisaic principles, having been zealous towards God, like his opponents, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. No one, when St. Paul mentioned Gamaliel, would have accused the latter of any leaning towards Christianity. Certainly on the present occasion his orthodoxy was by all unquestioned. Further, his learning was acknowledged. His reputation, too, was made. Any counsel from him would naturally meet with respect from the rest of the Sanhedrin. It would have weight with the chief doctors of the day. And if he be the man celebrated in the Talmud as Rabban—*i.e.*, our master—the son of Simon, a grandson of Hillel, as is generally thought, we can understand the Apostle Paul speaking of him as his former teacher, as well as the prompt acceptance now of his advice, Pharisee though he was, by the Sadducean part of the council.

Something remarkable had clearly taken place since the whole number of the Apostles had been brought out of prison without human instrumentality, and without the slightest suspicion of connivance on the part of the guard before the doors. What power, then, was at work? was a very pertinent question. Caution in their proceedings it was well at that juncture to observe. So at the command of Gamaliel the Apostles were ordered to withdraw, whilst the council deliberated as to their judgment. Gamaliel then spoke in the absence of the prisoners, and, impressed with the startling occurrence of the escape from the prison, he counselled delay in dealing with the movement. It was wise advice, indeed. And he fortified it by reference to facts in history, with which all present were doubtless conversant. Of two men he spoke, self-assumed

leaders in revolts, whose efforts to carry out their purposes signally and ignominiously failed. The first was a man named Theudas,* who having raised a faction, and giving himself out to be somebody, got a following of about four hundred men. But he was slain, his deluded followers were dispersed by the secular power, and it all came to nothing. After him arose Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing or enrolment, referred to in Luke ii. 1, 2. Some followed him. He too perished, and as many as obeyed him were scattered abroad. In both these instances Gamaliel directs attention to this—that the end of the leaders was death, and then their followers were dispersed. Was this new movement to end like those? It was true a parallel could so far be traced. As with Theudas and Judas, so with the Lord—death had removed Him from earth. Would the parallel become still more complete by the ultimate dispersion of His followers? Time would show. "Let them alone," he said: "if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot [or, will not be able to] overthrow it [or rather, them]; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts v. 38, 39). Here was the gist of the matter. Was it of God, or was it not? Time manifested that it was of God. It has never, therefore, been overthrown. But the rulers who fought against the Apostles—where are they? Then were Theudas and Judas of that class which the

* Who this Theudas was is unknown. Josephus mentions a man of this name who stirred up a revolt. But he lived years after the time to which Gamaliel must refer. A great number followed him,—so writes that historian. A small number of adherents the former had,—about four hundred men, Gamaliel said. Evidently they were different persons. The name Theudas was not uncommon. Some have thought to invalidate Luke's testimony here, by supposing that the man mentioned by Josephus is the one intended. A little examination leads to the conclusion that the men were quite different, and the historian's veracity remains unimpeached. He is not convicted of an anachronism.

Lord called thieves and robbers? (John x. 8). Probably they were. So the sheep did not hear them. But now it was different. The Shepherd had come. The sheep heard Him.

To this counsel they unanimously gave heed. The Apostles, called back, were to hear the decision of their judges. Some show of authority must be displayed. Their injunction to Peter and John had been openly disobeyed. Severer measures must on this occasion be taken. So they beat them all, and then dismissed them, charging them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Thus ended the trial and this second conflict with the new movement. Were the Apostles discouraged? Were they effectually cowed by the stripes? Their judges could see what effect they had produced; for those beaten departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the Name, as Luke probably wrote. Suffering and shame were taken as an honour, and not regarded as a disgrace, by these men. Would the charge of the rulers be treated with respect and command obedience? "Every day, in the Temple, and at home, they ceased not to teach and preach that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts v. 42). Threats did not intimidate them; sufferings did not silence them; ignominious treatment did not cool their ardour. Verily, their prayer in iv. 29 had received the answer they desired. All boldness characterised them.

The Holy Ghost.—To a truth met with in this chapter we must call attention. We refer to the remarkable announcement made by Peter of the Holy Ghost as a witness distinct from, and in addition to, the Apostles. "We are witnesses," he said to the council, "of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (v. 32). Of course the Spirit spoke and wrought by the Apostles. But though unseen by human eyes, He was Himself a witness, because, as we here learn, of His personal presence on earth, of that to

which the Apostles also had borne their testimony. This was in character with the Lord's announcement, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (John xv. 26, 27). Given only to those who obey God—but to all such, a special blessing therefore in which they alone can share—His presence here concerns every one. No one should be in ignorance of it. He is on earth. He dwells on earth in the Church of God (Eph. ii. 22).

As we have already seen, He came, sent from the Father and by the Son at Pentecost, and He will remain dwelling here till the rapture takes place. Hence it is that He joins with the Church—the Bride—in the request to the Lord to come (Rev. xxii. 17): "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come," etc. As dwelling, too, on earth—a Divine Person, the Third Person of the Godhead—He directs the work down here, guiding the labourers as to their fields of service. Of this we shall have examples further on. But besides this, His very presence as dwelling on earth is a standing testimony to the sin of the world in rejecting the Lord. (See John xvi. 7-11.) He is here because the Lord is absent, and will depart before He returns to reign. For though always working on earth in grace since the Fall, He never came to dwell here till Pentecost. He did not therefore, as Scripture calls it, "come" till then. Hence the Apostle John could write in his Gospel (vii. 39), "The Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This term *was not* may be called almost a technical one, being used to describe a person's absence from earth (Gen. v. 24, xlii. 36). Now the Spirit, who had first come at Pentecost, was dwelling here when Peter addressed the council. He dwells here still; and the fact of His presence gave emphasis to the charge brought by that same Apostle

against Ananias and Sapphira. They "lied to the Holy Ghost." They "tempted the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts v. 3, 9).

Hitherto, however, in the Acts, beyond the recital of His outpouring at Pentecost, and the fact that believers could and did receive the Holy Ghost, we have not read much about Him. His testimony by the Apostles to the Lord Jesus Christ has, until now, chiefly occupied us. But here (v. 32) His presence on earth is asserted, and His being a witness for Christ is affirmed. This is dispensational truth, and a leading feature of the Christian dispensation. God, be it remembered, in the person of the Holy Ghost, now dwells on earth. As Jehovah, God had dwelt in the midst of His redeemed people Israel. Leaving them because of their idolatry, the Son of God in due time came, and tabernacled among them in flesh. Now, since the Son has been rejected, the Holy Ghost dwells here, witnessing by His presence to the acceptance on high of the sacrifice of the Lord, having come consequent on His ascension, and sent by the Father and by the Son (John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7-11). Hence from what we have stated, it is evident that this must be the last dispensation ere Divine power deals with the enemies of God. Jehovah as such, the God of Israel, forsook His temple, because of that people's sins. Next the Son was cast out of the world by men. God's last appeal, then, is made by the coming, and the effects of that coming, of the Holy Ghost. Will that be more successful? Attempts to stop or mar the work the historian has related. Their failure he has also recounted. Other attempts he will bring to the notice of his readers. Baffled they will also be. Yet the world, we have to say, has not been won to God.

V.

MURMURINGS AND MARTYRDOM.

ACTS VI., VII.

THE hostility of the ecclesiastical power was now pronounced. No doubt could be entertained that it would strain every nerve to crush the movement. But the great opponent and the determined enemy was one unseen, though ever active. Power from without the Church should still then be exercised against it, and efforts from within to break up the harmony and disintegrate the community were not to be neglected. Of these last we are now first to read.

Murmurings.—Community of goods, as we have seen (Acts v. 4), was never enjoined by the Apostles, though it displayed, in a way not to be mistaken, the feeling of oneness among the saints engendered by the baptism of the Spirit. Poverty was from the outset a marked feature of the Church in Jerusalem. To relieve that, daily ministrations were carried on. Through this the enemy now sought to work, and to sow dissension among the converts. A cry was raised that the widows of the Grecian Jews were neglected to the advantage of the native-born Hebrews. Hence there began a murmuring against the Hebrews—*i.e.*, the native Jews—on the part of the Grecian Jews, called Hellenists, because speaking Greek.*

"Dost thou know Greek?"—*Hellenisti* (Acts xxi. 37)—were the words of the captain to Paul. A Greek-speaking Jew was therefore called *Hellenistes—i.e.*, one who spoke Greek.

Hellenists.—A few remarks on this class may be acceptable to the reader. Here for the first time are they mentioned. In ix. 29 they are mentioned a second time by the historian, who never again speaks of them by name. In Jerusalem there must have been no inconsiderable number of them. They had several synagogues, of which it is thought by some that five are mentioned (vi. 9): that of the Libertines or Roman freedmen; that of the Cyrenians of North Africa; that of the Alexandrians; then another for those from Cilicia; and a fifth for those of Proconsular Asia. These different synagogues, and the fact that the Hellenists had synagogues of their own in the capital of Judaism, showed that there was some cleavage between them and the natives—whether caused simply by language or not, it is not easy to say. At all events, they had synagogical interests apart, and probably each synagogue cared for its own poor. To these Greek-speaking Jews, Stephen, perhaps one of them, was exceedingly obnoxious. They disputed with him. And later Paul, who certainly had been one of that class, disputed against them, and stirred up at Jerusalem their animosity to such a pitch that they went about to kill him (ix. 29).

Understanding, then, that the Hellenists had synagogues of their own, it might well happen in the Christian assembly that the widows formerly of that class found themselves neglected by those who had been native-born Jews. Was the community, then, to be broken up by this matter? Were strife and jealousy to get a footing, to mar the peace and joy which had so conspicuously reigned? It was a wily plan of the enemy indeed. Natural feeling is soon stirred, unless grace is active. Parties would then be quickly formed, and the once united company of Christians would be hopelessly rent asunder. This threatened danger was averted by apostolic wisdom under the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Deacons appointed.—For the Apostles at this juncture

interposed, and called a public meeting of the disciples. Had they taken the responsibility of distributing to the necessities of saints, doubtless all would have been satisfied, assured of their impartiality. More important work, however, than serving tables devolved on them. So they thus addressed the assembled disciples: "It is not reason [or, fit] that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost [or rather, full of the Spirit] and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry [or, continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry] of the Word" (vi. 2-4). The advice accepted, seven men with the above-named qualifications were quickly found and unanimously elected. Instruments fitted for the work were at hand, and all residents in Jerusalem.

"Men of honest report,"—this was one qualification for the service: the testimony and judgment of others were not to be esteemed of no account. "Full of the Holy Ghost" was another qualification: *full*, not *filled*, thus marking the general walk of the individual. Full "of wisdom,"—this was the third suggested qualification. Seven men, in whom all these were found, were soon selected. Their names were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch. Some, if not the most, of these, if their names are any index, must have been Hellenistic Jews. Of two of the seven—Stephen and Philip—our historian will have more to tell us. The others who here come on the scene do not appear on the face of the narrative again.

Important Points.—Two points here call for attention: the one is, by whom these men were chosen; the other is, by whom they were appointed. Those who appointed them did not choose them; those who chose them could not appoint them. "Deacons" they are commonly called,

yet the historian never so designates them. Clearly it was to an office they were appointed—that of serving tables (Acts vi. 1, 2). But the qualifications needed for their selection mark them out as different from the deacons of later years (1 Tim. iii. 8-10). Their service, too, was a special one, and restricted to the assembly in Jerusalem; for elsewhere such a difficulty, as was met by their appointment, could clearly not have arisen.

Appointed to administer the funds furnished by the saints, it was only fitting that the company of believers should select them. Similarly, at a later time, when St. Paul was making collections in different Churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he left it to those assemblies which contributed to choose the delegates by whom their alms should be carried to Jerusalem (1 Cor. xvi. 3; 2 Cor. viii. 19). Those who contribute may justly look that they should have a voice in the selection of the channel through which their bounty is to flow. But though selecting the men, the Apostles it was who appointed them to their office; for appointment to office in the Church of God by ordination, whatever the office might be, was vested in the Apostles, or in those to whom they delegated that power, as to Titus (i. 5), and probably, though that is not stated, to Timothy also.

To exercise ministry in the Word, it needed no apostolic authorisation. Ministers of the Word are gifts from the ascended Christ to men (Eph. iv. 11, 12), and are set in the assembly by God Himself (1 Cor. xii. 28), who has in that chapter given us, as it were, the table of precedence in the assembly of all who are called to minister to those within it.* On the other hand, to fill an office as that of an elder or a deacon, apostolic authority, direct or indirect, was required (Acts xiv. 23; Titus i. 5). So the Apostles

* This explains the absence of evangelists in the passage. Their sphere is especially outside the assembly, though equally with teachers gifts from the ascended Christ.

told the assembly to select the men "whom *we* may appoint over this business." We should mark the *we* here. It spoke of an authority which none of the company save the Apostles could exercise. The seven selected men set before the Twelve, they prayed and laid their hands on them—an act expressive of their recognition of the duties these were called to discharge, and surely of fellowship with them in it. Here we have the first ordination in the Christian Church—an ordination, we would repeat, not to preach, but to discharge the office of serving tables. In prayer and in the ministry of the Word the Apostles would continue. The serving of tables the seven selected men were to undertake.

Thus was this danger averted. Grace worked in all. The suggestion of the Apostles was readily accepted. The men were chosen by the assembly, and then set apart solemnly for their work. Did it appear a small service? True, the Apostles declined to undertake it. They, however, set the seven apart by prayer. They turned to God about them, and doubtless looked up for the grace and wisdom they would need in the discharge of their important work. It concerned the welfare of the assembly. It was no trivial matter in the estimation of the Apostles. It was, we may surely say, no small matter in the eyes of God.

Onward now went the movement, like a rolling river, which ever and anon carries away some fresh objects. This attempt to disintegrate the Church completely failed. The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and even the ranks of the priesthood furnished recruits to the increasing host, for a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith (Acts vi. 7). Converts from the populace, converts from the priests, and that in no small number—such was the report which the missionary record of that day could have furnished.

Stephen.—Hitherto the ministry of Peter is all that we have been furnished with. Another one now comes on the

scene, not an Apostle, but one, and the first named of the seven, chosen to serve tables. To minister in temporal things was one thing; but he could labour in the Word as well. And that he did. The service to which he was appointed did not prevent his testimony to the Lord Jesus going forth, and that in a powerful way. But in character with the Gospel work amongst the Jews, the first thing that we have is a notice of the great wonders and miracles which he wrought. Yet though full of grace and power, a vessel chosen, and wonderfully used, we have no detailed account of any wonder or miracle that he was empowered to perform.

Much, how much, could surely have been recounted of the display of the power of the Spirit by the early Christians. How little has been placed on record! It was not the aim of the Church's first historian, guided as he was by the Holy Ghost, to exalt men, or to hold them forth as prodigies of their day. Besides, as miracles were to draw the attention of those who witnessed them to something new that was taking place—the introduction of a new dispensation—a full account of the wonders wrought would be out of place in a history designed to instruct succeeding generations, not just in a record of displays of almighty power, but in the character of the work which was going forward to win souls to God and to His Son. Now, since the ministry of the Word in the power of the Spirit alone does this, we see Divine wisdom displayed in presenting from time to time an outline of that ministry, whilst passing over very many details of the exercise of miraculous power.

Besides, however, working miracles, Stephen was a champion for the faith. Certain of the Hellenistic Jews disputed with him. Some from different synagogues of that portion of the nation, residents, we suppose, in Jerusalem, or at all events visiting there, took part in this. Numbers were on their side. He alone is mentioned as valiantly contending for the truth. But numbers did not overawe

him. Alone he could face his opponents, and discomfit them. "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts vi. 10). An awkward antagonist they had met with. For not merely did they not convince him, nor could they silence him; but the wisdom he displayed, and the Holy Spirit by whom he spake, they could not resist. "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist nor to gainsay" (Luke xxi. 15), had been the Lord's promise. And the evangelist, who has preserved that, here tells us how truly it was fulfilled. One man could confound a multitude. Intellects of no mean order, if we may judge from Saul of Tarsus, might be arrayed against him. But the Holy Ghost was with him, and all his opponents felt themselves completely baffled.

Plots.—Something, however, they felt must be done to get rid of such a troublesome disputant. Since arguments could not silence him, nor their dialectical powers confound him, other means must be tried. Men were suborned who declared, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God" (Acts vi. 11). It is significant that the honour of Moses is here put in the foreground before that of God. Like a straw on the water, it shows whence the current flowed. Would a charge in that form have been dictated by the Holy Ghost? This accusation, however, did its work in stirring up the populace. A popular cry may be raised without any demand on the part of the multitude for proof of the accusation. It was thus, evidently, in this case. For the people, the elders, and the scribes were aroused by the *ex-parte* statements of those despicable people ready to commit perjury to procure Stephen's condemnation. Seizing him, they hurried him before the council.

Definite statements had now to be made. The council could not convict him on such a general charge as these informers had propagated. Witnesses must be forthcoming.

And as in the Lord's case, so here—Stephen's enemies could bring forward none but false ones. The charge of blasphemy was now verbally dropped * for the more precise statement, "This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth [or, the Nazorœan] shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us" (vi. 13, 14).

Such was the indictment to which Stephen would have to answer. Naturally all eyes were turned to the prisoner. What did they see? One pallid with fear? One trembling for the consequences of his acts, and shrinking from punishment? No! A sight they witnessed to which they were entirely unaccustomed. "Fastening their eyes on him, they saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel." A criminal about to die: was that the one who stood before them? Rather it was one like an angel prepared to go to heaven. The high priest's voice was now heard saying, "Are these things so?" Then in the midst, as we may well believe, of breathless silence, the voice of Stephen was heard addressing the Sanhedrists, the ecclesiastical judges before whom he was arraigned.

His Speech.—"Brethren and fathers," he began, the usual way of addressing such a company, if treating them with respect (xxii. 1). "Brethren" would include his equals; "fathers" would refer to the seniors in age, and to all in official position of rule. Then starting with the first beginning of the nation's existence, dating it from Abraham, he rehearses its history to the days of Moses, pointing out that twice over their ancestors made the great mistake of rejecting the instrument which God had designed for their deliverance. First it was Joseph. Next it was Moses. Joseph's brethren sold into Egypt the one who turned out to be their saviour and deliverer. By his own people Moses was refused in the land of Egypt, and in the wilderness they

* "Blasphemous" should be omitted in ver. 13.

thrust him from them, and turned back in heart to Egypt. But more. They called Aaron to make for them gods. God then gave them up to serve the host of heaven. Of this Amos is a witness, and Stephen cites him for that purpose (Amos v. 25-27). Rejecting then Moses, they also rejected God (Acts vii. 2-40). With these facts before them they might well pause, and carefully consider what they were doing, and whither they might be drifting. The mistake committed in connection with Joseph they had repeated in connection with Moses. What were they doing now? They were repeating that mistake. And in rejecting the Saviour in the person of the Lord Jesus they were really turning from God, and will, as we know, be landed by-and-by in an idolatry of a new and unheard-of kind. To pause then, and reflect, became them; and all the more because Moses, for whom they professed such attachment, had distinctly written of a prophet whom "God," said Stephen, would raise up unto them like unto Moses.

Was Stephen denying Moses by preaching the Lord Jesus Christ as the one to whom they should hearken? Groundless was such an accusation with Deut. xviii. 18, 19 before them. And if they were to hearken to that prophet in all he should say unto them, he might—could they deny it?—bring fresh revelations, which would effect a change as to the observance of the customs on behalf of which they professed such zeal. Then as to the count in the indictment of speaking against "the holy place," did they not remember that the tabernacle had given place to the Temple; and long after the erection of that latter structure God had declared by the prophet Isaiah that heaven, not a material building on earth, was really His dwelling-place? "The heaven is My throne, and the earth is the footstool of My feet: what manner of house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest? Did not My hands make all these things?" (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2).

Well had Stephen met the accusations. No wonder that

his opponents could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake, if what we have in his speech was a sample of his manner of reasoning, as doubtless was the case. Stephen dealt with Scripture, and used that sword with effect, taught of the Spirit how to apply it. And now having met the grave charges brought against him, except that referring to the law, he turned and charged all before him with acting like their fathers in the past, and boldly affirmed that the law, for which they professed such zeal, they had not kept. With what consistency, then, could they ground a charge against him with reference to it? We quote his words: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do alway resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of [or, as it was ordained by] angels, and have not kept it" (Acts vii. 51-53). A heavy indictment this. Children of their fathers they prided themselves to be. What answer could they make to this? Stephen had met them by the Word. They would reply to him by force. But ere carrying out that purpose, to one more testimony on behalf of the Lord Jesus they had to listen: that would leave them without excuse.

The Opened Heavens.—Cut to the heart, they gnashed on him with their teeth. So writes the historian, narrating what must have been commonly known. Evidently Stephen's judges were in no condition to conduct a calm and dispassionate inquiry. Anger dominated them, and they showed it. He, perfectly calm, and undismayed by the marked token of their hostility, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. The heavens had been opened on two previous occasions. To Ezekiel they were opened, when a captive at the river Chebar (Ezek. i. 1, 26-28),

and about to prophesy of the approaching judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. He then saw visions of God, and the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord, even the likeness of a man on the throne. Six centuries later the heavens were again opened, and the Holy Spirit like a dove descended, and rested on the head of the latest One baptised by John in Jordan—the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark i. 10). In a coming day they will again be opened, and the Lord with His train of heavenly saints will come forth to establish the kingdom of God in power upon earth (Rev. xix. 11). On the present occasion, when the heavens were opened to Stephen, no one came forth; but the faithful witness saw in heaven the One for whom he was suffering on earth. God was thereby ministering to His servant, who was shortly to die as a martyr. Thus his faith should be sustained, and his latest testimony be clear and unique. Whether he had ever seen the Lord when on earth we know not. He knew Him, however, as He beheld Him in heaven, and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56).

The Son of Man.—Of this One Daniel had written, and in vision he had seen Him (Dan. vii. 13). David, too, in the Psalms (viii.) had sung of Him. The Lord Jesus also had distinctly applied this designation to Himself, intimating that He was the one of whom the prophet had written (Mark xiv. 61, 62). Stephen now saw Him as the Son of man and in heaven, and there standing in the place of honour—at the right hand of God. Power, then, belongs to the crucified One, and as Son of man He will one day exercise it; and all things must be placed under His feet whom the Jews had crucified and slain. Many, probably, of the members of the council had been present when the Lord Jesus declared of Himself that He was the Son of man (Luke xxii. 69-71), and had part in judging Him worthy of death for that. Now Stephen tells them

to their face that he could see the One who had once stood at their bar standing at the right hand of God. The inference was plain—a child could draw it. Their guilt was undeniable. The weighty charge just brought against them of murdering the Righteous One was but too true (Acts vii. 52). Righteous He was. His presence in heaven attested that. No room was left for any argument as to the validity of His claims. The case was settled. The verdict was against the council. What would they now do?

Martyrdom.—Like others since their day, to an unanswerable reply they would resort to force. And apparently without giving him any time for reflection, they hurried Stephen off to execution. For crying with a loud voice, and stopping their ears, they rushed on him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. No sentence, that we read of, was pronounced. In a state of frenzy they had their way. Stephen was stoned,* the witnesses laying down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. By the law the witnesses were to cast the first stone at the criminal (Deut. xvii. 7). This was not overlooked at that moment.

Would Stephen quail before death? Would he now renounce the faith he had preached? Would he still confess the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Master? He speaks. But not to his murderers. To One in heaven he addresses himself. To Him who is God he spoke, yet not as the God of Israel. All could hear what he said, and to whom he spoke. He called to One in heaven by

* The Jews could only condemn to death with the sanction of the Procurator. At this juncture, however, there was none. Pilate had been ordered to Rome to answer charges made against him, and no one was appointed in his place. The procuratorship was vacant. Further, just at this time Tiberius the emperor died. Events thus favouring, the Sanhedrin, taking things into their own hands, put Stephen to death without fear of being called to account for it.

a title, and by that name which witnessed of His humanity —"Lord Jesus." They stoned him. He was "calling on,* and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 59). To the crucified One he committed himself in that solemn hour. To Him who had not saved Himself from death the dying martyr prayed, and entrusted to His keeping his interests in quiet confidence,—his interests, his future, his spirit. What a testimony! How much was Christ to him! What a confession was his! To Christ he committed himself, when absent from the body. In dying, as in living, he confessed Jesus as Lord. The first Christian of whose death we read has taught us what Christ could be to him in his dying hour. And one who stood by, that young man named Saul, years after, in the prospect of his death, could write: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12). What is not Christ to the believer in the hour of the dissolution of his body!

Again, though only once more, Stephen's voice was heard, and that in accents clear and strong. He had spoken to the Lord about himself. He now speaks to Him about his murderers. Familiar as he doubtless was with the Old Testament, his language was not couched in the vein of a saint under law. On his knees, in the attitude of prayer, and in a voice loud enough for those around to hear, the last words from his lips were words of prayer for those who had hurried him to his end. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Silence, the silence of death, now followed. He fell asleep. Like his Master he prayed for his enemies, and like Him committed himself to One in heaven. In the Lord's case it was to His Father; in Stephen's, it was to his Saviour and Lord. With Stephen's death the message began to be sent after the

* So we should render the passage, not supplying any noun after "calling upon,"

nobleman, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14). It formed, therefore, an epoch in the history of the nation.

And now the testimony in Jerusalem, as far as the Acts records it, comes to a close. Intimidation (iv.), persecution (v.), and martyrdom had been tried (vii.) to stop, if possible, the preaching of the Gospel; but, as we learn, without success. Threats, beatings, and even death had no terrors for the Christians. The arrows in the quiver seemed exhausted. Nothing more terrible could be devised than death. So, in spite of all that the ecclesiastical authorities could do, the preaching of the Lord Jesus went forward in undiminished power, the witnesses working with unflagging zeal. For Stephen's death, since it scattered the company of disciples hitherto resident at Jerusalem, except the Apostles, furnished the occasion for spreading the Gospel more abroad. The disciples, we learn, "went everywhere [or, about] preaching the Word" (viii. 4). To this new development of the movement the historian will now turn, beginning with the work in Samaria, and going on to the spread of it among the Gentiles.

Who the Lord is.—But here one may conveniently pause, and review what has been brought out relative to the Lord Jesus Christ. The theme of prophecy, as He unquestionably was, He had been proclaimed by Peter as Lord and Christ, in accordance with Psalms xvi. and cx. He had also been introduced as the Servant of Jehovah (Acts iii. 13), a character in which Isaiah presents Him; and He had been twice declared to be the Prophet of whom Moses wrote (iii. 22, vii. 37), as well as the rejected corner stone, in accordance with Psalm cxviii. As the Prince (or, Author) of life, Peter preached Him in Solomon's porch. As the Saviour for Israel he proclaimed Him twice over before the council (Acts iv. 12, v. 31). To His personal character, as righteous and holy, that same Apostle, as well as Stephen, bore witness (iii. 14, vii. 52). Moreover, He

is the Son of man, of whom Daniel wrote, now in heaven (vii. 56), but who will come back to earth at a future day (iii. 20, 21). One other important testimony to Him has still to be unfolded. For though presented already as the *Servant* of Jehovah, He was subsequently to be preached to the Jews as the *Son* of God. The vessel, however, appointed first to set this forth had yet to be called out by the grace of God.

Criticisms.—Before passing on from Stephen's history, we must advert to some objections brought against his speech, indications, it has by some been supposed, of his want of acquaintance with the Old Testament history to which he referred. The late Bishop Christopher Wordsworth enumerates *ten* objections, with all which he professes to deal, and to refute—whether effectively or not of course the reader must judge. But ten objections advanced against Stephen's speech indicate that the martyr's historical statements are regarded by some as very questionable. Had we verbatim shorthand writer's notes of what he did say, the objections raised against his accuracy would have great weight. But considering that no unical MS. can be traced back earlier than the fourth century, it is evident that there had been time between his day and the date of the earliest uncial of the New Testament for mistakes to have crept in, before even the copies were in existence from which the Vatican and Sinaitic MSS. have been transcribed. So of versions, as the Peshito Syriac, or the Latin and others, made originally at an earlier date than any uncial MS. that we possess, though they may, and often do, confirm the readings of the MSS. which are supposed to be most correct, yet we have no certainty that some mistakes may not have crept into the copies from which those versions were originally made. Hence mistakes, if there be any really in Stephen's speech, may be due, not to his lack of information or want of accuracy, but to some transcriber in very early days. Without affirming the probability of this, we

must admit the possibility of it. Of some of these objections rational explanations have been offered. Of others we are not in a position to offer a real solution. If there are mistakes, how they arose we have no means in this nineteenth century of determining. On the other hand, considering how limited is our knowledge of matters to which he refers, it seems wiser, whilst confessing the difficulties, to leave them, in the present state of our knowledge, without attempting their removal; and this seems the more incumbent, because Stephen supplies us with some information the accuracy of which we have no reason to doubt, though not met with in the Old Testament. He tells us, for instance, that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and was mighty in his words and deeds (Acts vii. 22). Of this Exodus has no record. He states also the lawgiver's age when he began to visit his brethren (23). On this also the Old Testament is silent. It may be that, had we more information, we should find that the statements made by Stephen, assuming they are correctly reported, are not the blunders which have been supposed. Till more information is forthcoming, we had better leave the question there.

VI.

SAMARIA EVANGELISED.

ACTS VIII.

"YE shall be witnesses unto Me in Samaria" (Acts i. 8) were part of the Lord's last words to His disciples. Hitherto, since Pentecost, none had gone out to the people of that province. At Jerusalem all the preaching had been carried on, and to it from the country round the sick had been brought for healing (v. 16). But diffusion, not concentration, was to be characteristic of Christianity. So just as the confusion of tongues at Babel resulted in the dispersion abroad of men upon earth, so the persecution which began on the day of Stephen's death, as Luke really wrote, resulted in the scattering abroad of the disciples. "And there arose" (we quote the Revised Version) "on that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles" (viii. 1).

Stephen's Burial.—Who, then, would bury Stephen? The Christians, like the Apostles at the Crucifixion, were unable to come forward to give the martyred one an honourable and the accustomed funeral rites. But, as in the Lord's case, God provided for this, and in a most unlooked-for way. If the Christians could not volunteer, devout* men, godly Jews, were willing to perform the last

* *Devout*, or pious, *eulabeis*, the same term as in ii. 5. They were

sad offices. They buried him, and made great lamentation over him (viii. 2). There were in Jerusalem pious men, still professedly Jews, very probably Hellenists or foreign Jews, who had no part in that murder, and had no sympathy with those who stoned Stephen. They showed this in the most marked way by burying him, and greatly lamenting him.

Saul.—A little is now told us of a young man who made himself most prominent in opposing the truth. He had kept the raiment of the witnesses who stoned the martyr, for he had consented to his death. He must have heard Stephen's prayer for his murderers, and have witnessed, we may conclude, Stephen in his dying moments on his knees for his opponents. Yet nothing he witnessed, nothing he then heard, softened him in the slightest degree. Zeal for religion, unless tempered by grace, may make its votary the most implacable of mortals. Such at this time became Saul. We may call him the Torquemada of his day.* For he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. Nothing like this had taken place before. It was systematic persecution of an inquisitorial character. Private houses were invaded, and the prisons populated with Christians of both sexes. So far we learn from the historian.

personally pious, and are to be distinguished from a class called *sebomenoi*, which is also translated *devout*. These last were Gentile proselytes, who worshipped the God of Israel (xiii. 43, 50, xvii. 4, 17). The *sebomenoi* describe a class distinguished from Jews. *Eulabeis* speaks of personal character, which might be true of any saint of God.

* This man, Thomas de Torquemada, was the founder of the Spanish Inquisition in the fifteenth century. During the eighteen years of his ministry in Spain, no less than 10,220 persons were burnt as heretics, 6,860 condemned and burnt in effigy, and 97,321 reconciled by other punishments. Torquemada was allowed to carry out his relentless persecution. Saul was arrested in the midst of his, and converted.

But when we read Saul's own account of it, years after his conversion, the horrors of that time appear in an awful light. "I verily," he said, "thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth [or, the Nazoræan]. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many also of the saints did I shut up in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme" (Acts xxvi. 9-11). What a time it must have been! No wonder that all were scattered abroad from Jerusalem who could get away, except the Apostles. Imprisonments and deaths were frequent events, and some whose faith gave way were made to blaspheme. Stephen was the first martyr, but evidently not the only one. Many were put to death at that time. It was a great persecution indeed. The Apostles were not touched. Probably the previous unsuccessful attempt against them, related in chap. v., made the authorities afraid to apprehend them.

Through Judæa and Samaria the disciples now went preaching the Word. Of the work in Judæa we have little record, save that we learn from the Galatians (i. 22) that there were assemblies in that province, and one perhaps at Lydda, and probably one at Joppa (Acts ix. 32-43), before Peter's memorable visit to Cæsarea. We know, too, that Philip preached systematically in part of the province between Ashdod and the town just named. To Samaria we are, however, specially directed, which, since the deposition of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, was placed, in common with Judæa, under the Roman governor, who was subject to the imperial officer in Syria.

In the Gospels we have notices of Samaria. At Sychar, very early in our Lord's ministry, before indeed the imprisonment of the Baptist, a work went on of which we have some information in connection with and consequent

on the Lord's interview with the woman at the well (John iv.). In Samaria at a later date the Lord experienced opposition from the inhabitants of a certain village, who declined to receive Him (Luke ix. 52), because His face was as though He were going to Jerusalem. Hearty reception and distinct rejection—these had been the Lord's experiences in Samaria.

Philip.—Now Philip, one of the seven chosen in chap. vi. to serve tables, but set free doubtless from that service in consequence of the persecution, went down to Samaria from Jerusalem. To what city in that province he went is not distinctly stated. Some have supposed it was the capital. Others have suggested Sychar. Sufficient for us is it to know of the work which went on. "He went down to a [or, the] city of Samaria, and preached the Christ unto them. And the people [rather, multitudes] with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great [or, much] joy in that city" (Acts viii. 5-8). What Jews refused, Samaritans gladly received. Malice filled hearts at Jerusalem. Much joy pervaded the people of that city in Samaria. For Philip preached Christ unto them.

Preaching Christ.—We may mark the term—preaching *Christ*, not simply *Jesus*; for he could and did preach both. To the eunuch, who was reading the prophetic description of the Lord's humiliation, Philip preached *Jesus* (viii. 35), opening up to him who it was who thus suffered—Jesus, the Virgin's child. To the Samaritans he preached *Christ*. Now to preach Christ involves the setting forth the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus. For it is as risen and ascended, as we learn from Peter, that *we* —*i.e.*, Christians—know Him as the Christ (ii. 36). As risen, we learn of God's acceptance of His sacrifice, and

hence of the sure ground on which all stand who believe on Him. We take our stand on the *accepted* sacrifice—own that all has been done that He had to do; and justified by His blood, know the blessing of justification by faith, and in consequence—peace with God (Rom. iv. 24—v. 9). As ascended, we have a light cast upon the Person who died, and on the value of the sacrifice. He has ascended to God's right hand who died as a man on the cross. He is therefore a Divine Person as well. How great, then, must be the efficacy of His sacrifice who, once on the cross, is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens! So preaching *Christ* implies a very full Gospel, which sets the one who receives it in the conscious enjoyment of peace with God. Preaching *Jesus* would not necessarily include all that is involved in preaching *Christ*. There is a time for each. And evidently Philip, divinely led, knew when to preach the one, and when to preach the other.

The fields in that city of Samaria were white for harvest. And whilst Saul was carrying on his dire persecution at Jerusalem, Philip was blessedly engaged in evangelising in Samaria. The devil was stirring up the former. The Spirit of God was guiding and blessing the latter. And now a most marked proof of the power of the Word was displayed by the people, who turned to Philip, and embraced the Gospel, though formerly captivated by a sorcerer named Simon. In one way such an overturn might seem nothing strange. Something new generally attracts the crowd. And displays of miraculous power might well have arrested attention. But the change wrought in this case was permanent. The impression Simon had produced, great as it had been, was after all transient. Philip's preaching made abiding impressions. It was not just a gaping crowd following a miracle-worker. Souls were deeply impressed, for consciences were dealt with. Many became earnest, and not merely enthusiastic.

Simon Magus.—Who was that sorcerer? Simon by

name, he is commonly called Magus, indicative of his profession—a *magician* or sorcerer. By his magical arts he had bewitched the people, and had established himself in their estimation as a marvel. He gave himself out for some great one. The people gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, declaring, so we should read, "This man is that power of God which is called Great" (viii. 10). To those captivated by Simon, Philip preached—not, however, himself, but Christ. How different must he have appeared to them all from the sorcerer. Both did wonders. Simon exalted himself, and accepted the adulation of the crowd. Philip preached Another, and enlisted the converts as disciples of Christ. He sank himself, his glory, his greatness, in the excellency of the One whom he preached. Was he dazzled by the power of Simon? Certainly not. He did what amazed Simon, who felt himself in the presence of one greater than himself. Simon wondered, we are told, beholding the signs and great miracles wrought. A power greater than that which he had known was at work, and he was constrained to admit it. It was the power of the Holy Ghost. And the message proclaimed, the historian is careful to state, was good news to those who received it.

The effect on the people was decided. Prestige, which had been with the sorcerer, disappeared like snow before the sun. From being bewitched by Simon they turned to be baptised by Philip, who had preached what they now believed was good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. True converts had been made; and even Simon took his place as a convert among them. He too was baptised. What a testimony had been borne to the power of the truth! People felt it. They owned it. For they were baptised unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. God was triumphing in the place where the enemy had dazzled so many. For turning once for all from Simon, they became disciples in truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A change indeed had been wrought by the preaching of the Gospel. And the miracles and wonders attested the messenger as one sent by God. Simon, the sorcerer, at the feet of Philip! The great one, as he loved to proclaim himself, now professedly the disciple of that new-comer, and doubtless fervent preacher! But Philip was only an evangelist. By that designation he was many years after described (Acts xxi. 8). Great as he seemed in the eyes of Simon, there were greater than he in the Church of God—even the Apostles of the Lord. Philip, we have said, was an evangelist. And it is interesting to observe that he knew his gift, and kept to it. For throughout this chapter, which gives us what may be called "the Acts of Philip," *preaching* is the service, and that only, in which he is seen engaging. "He *preached* Christ"; "He *preached* the things concerning the kingdom of God," etc.; "He *preached* Jesus"; "He *preached* the Gospel to all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea" (viii. 5, 12, 35, 40). Neither the gift of teaching nor that of exhorting was bestowed on him. In preaching he laboured, for he was an evangelist, and the only man so designated in the New Testament,* though not the only one of course who laboured in that line of service. Others, like Paul, might be teachers as well as evangelists. Philip was only an evangelist.

An Apostolic Visit.—Tidings of the success of the Gospel in Samaria reached the ears of the Apostles in Jerusalem. Two of their number were accordingly deputed to visit the scene of blessing. These were Peter and John. Philip's work was found real and stable. The Apostles accredited it. For, in the midst of the converts, and seeing surely the reality of the work, they had not to lay the foundation again, nor to supplement Philip's Gospel. Their service at that time was to confer on the converts full Christian blessing by the gift of the Holy Ghost. For that they

* Timothy was to do the work of an evangelist, but had other important work as well (2 Tim. iv. 5).

prayed. "As yet," as the historian acquaints us, "He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts viii. 16). Believers they were. Children of God they had become. Saved souls they certainly were. But in the belonging to Christ (Rom. viii. 9), and in the being members of His body (1 Cor. xii. 13), they had not as yet participated. These spiritual blessings depended on the receiving of the Holy Ghost. For that Peter and John prayed; and then laying their hands on the disciples, they received the Holy Ghost. We see then plainly that people may be believers, and yet be not what Scripture calls *sealed* (Eph. i. 13)—*i.e.*, be partakers of the gift of the Holy Ghost. But God desires not to leave any in that condition.

Now in three different ways was that gift bestowed in early days. 1st. The Spirit was poured out on the whole company at Pentecost. 2nd. Many saints, doubtless most, after that received the gift of the Spirit by the hearing of faith (Gal. iii. 2), believing the Gospel of their salvation (Eph. i. 13). 3rd. Others again—and these Samaritans were in the last class—received the Holy Ghost by the imposition of the hands of Apostles. The history of the Samaritans in the past very probably accounts for this in their case. For though professedly descended from Jacob (John iv. 12), they had started, and maintained since the days of Nehemiah,* a rival worship and a rival temple, erected on Mount Gerizim. Their position was really schismatical. It was independency. Hence they must learn that blessing only could reach them from Jerusalem. So not only had Philip left the capital to preach the Gospel to the Samaritans, but Peter and John also came down

* The Samaritan worship is dated from Manasseh, the son of Joiada, the son of Eliashib, the high priest, whom Nehemiah chased from him, as son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. He obtained leave from Darius Nothus to build a rival temple at Gerizim, about B.C. 409.

from it to give them the Holy Ghost. All their spiritual blessing was received through vessels connected with Jerusalem. Salvation was indeed from the Jews (John iv. 22).

Simon detected.—The sorcerer evidently looked on with amazement, beholding the power of the Apostles displayed in conferring the Holy Ghost. He well knew how men regarded any one professedly even endowed with supernatural powers. He knew, too, what temporal profit he had himself reaped by dazzling the multitude with his sorceries. If only he could possess that power which Peter and John had exhibited, what gains would he make! In what estimation would he be held! Hence he offered them money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii. 18, 19). The power to give the Spirit he desired, not the blessing of receiving it. For that he cared not. The answer of Peter was instantaneous, crushing, and decided, negativing the request, and defining Simon's true moral condition. Baptised though he had been, he had no spiritual life in his soul. Conversion he had never known. In the new birth he had never shared. He was yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and on the road to perishing, unless forgiveness of that thought of his heart was accorded to him. Real believers will never perish. Simon was not yet in that class, and so beyond the danger of it. "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God [rather, the Lord], if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (viii. 20-23). Simon believed, we have read (13). Evidently it was intellectual faith without any real conscience work. His heart was still not right with God. Who, consciously

sharing in Divine grace, could have made the request he did? Was conviction wrought in his soul by Peter's reply? Was his conscience at last really aroused? "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me," was the unhappy man's response. He desired to escape Divine judicial dealing. But that apparently was all. He asked for their prayers, but made no confession of his sin, nor does it appear that he prayed, as told to do, himself. With this he disappears from the pages of inspiration. And any notices of him in ecclesiastical history, mixed up though they may be with fables, confirm the Apostle's expressed judgment of him—that he had no part or lot in the matter. Persistent opposition to the truth is uniformly reported of him, and unceasing hostility and bitterness against Peter seem to have characterised that sorcerer to the end.

Much joy had been known in the city before the converts received the gift of the Holy Ghost. What must they have experienced on the reception of that gift? Freedom of spirit before God they would then have come to know, and the consciousness of their relationship to Him must have been experienced, their very utterance, addressing Him as they must have done as Father, being the expression of it. Short, probably, was the stay of the two Apostles after fulfilling the true purpose of their mission. For having testified and spoken the Word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching, however, by the way in many villages of the Samaritans. How changed were the people of that province and that sect! When the Lord had been going towards Jerusalem, entering a village inhabited by them, He was forced to leave it; for they would not receive Him, because His face was set toward the mother-city—Jerusalem (Luke ix. 53). Now Peter and John, who had been with Him at that time, met with no coldness, nor were they rebuffed by any in the Samaritan villages, though they were going up to Jerusalem. Samaria

was receiving the Word of God. When the Spirit really works, prejudices of ages melt away, and what might have been thought insuperable difficulties are found to be no longer in existence. God prepares hearts, and the Word can then fall on them like the soft refreshing benediction of dew on the parched earth. What a field it must have been to cultivate! But other work was appointed the evangelist Philip. To that he will now betake himself.

The Ethiopian Eunuch.—Left behind very possibly by the Apostles in that city, the converts of which must have become endeared to him, Philip, whilst they were pursuing their evangelistic service in the province of Samaria, received a call to go to another place. An angel of the Lord spake unto him, and directed him to go on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, "which [or, the same] is desert." He at once obeyed, and went. But why he was taken from the fruitful field of his labours was as yet a secret unknown to him. In the path of obedience he got light cast on his way. Desert though the place he reached was called, he found himself not alone in that locality. A eunuch—a man of great authority under Queen Candace,* and who was over all her treasure—a man therefore in whom the Queen reposed confidence, but more, either a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish faith—was returning from Jerusalem, whither he had gone to worship. Evidently the Temple service, and intercourse there with professed Jews, had not provided all that he was ready to receive. He had got from none of the doctors there the light which would open up the prophetic teaching of the Book of Isaiah. Yet he valued that portion of Divine revelation, and was studying it whilst on his homeward journey. Was he to

* Of this particular queen nothing seems known. The name *Candace* is thought to be, like that of Pharaoh, the designation of the sovereign, and not a personal proper name. In the time of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 1) Ethiopia continued to be governed by female sovereigns.

return to his country as uninformed on that book as he had left it? Circumstances seemed to point to that; for Jerusalem was behind, and he in a desert. Without a teacher, without a helper, he was quietly reading the book, when Philip, directed by the Spirit of God, accosted him with the question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

A stranger to that eunuch thus made bold to address him. Naturally he might have repulsed such an one. Why should that simple man, without retinue or even one attendant to mark rank, presume to intrude on such a high official as he was? He was not travelling alone. Doubtless he had a goodly number with him. But when the Spirit prepares hearts, they are ready to welcome assistance; and the outward appearance of the individual, or the strangeness of such a meeting, raises no objection in the mind of the true inquirer. So the eunuch replied to the question put to him, "How can I, except some man [rather, one] should guide me?" He needed help. He confessed it. And believing Philip could give it, he besought him to come up and sit with him. The servant of Candace and the servant of the Lord were thus together; and the former, who probably was accustomed to be listened to with respect, now sat as a pupil at the feet of the evangelist.

The portion of the prophet Isaiah was that with which we are familiar as the fifty-third chapter of the book. How all was ordered of God! A helper was provided for the eunuch, and the passage he was reading afforded an opening for Philip to discourse of the Lord Jesus. To the eunuch, however, the meaning was as yet dark. The light that he would welcome had not illuminated those verses (Isa. liii. 7, 8). But now he had only to ask this stranger to get them opened up to him, and to learn of whom the prophet was writing. "Philip," we read, "opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus." What a time that must have been! The Lord's rejection when in life was foretold in the *first* verse

(John xii. 38). His ways in grace, in healing, etc., were predicted in the *fourth* verse (Matt. viii. 17). His bearing our sins and the blessed result of that to us were stated in the *fifth* verse (1 Peter ii. 24). His spotless innocence was asserted in the *ninth* verse (1 Peter ii. 22). His burial in Joseph's tomb was announced in that same verse (Matt. xxvii. 57-60). And God's appreciation of Him set forth in the *last* verse. To what a history in that one short chapter must the eunuch with wonderment and delight have listened! Never before had the Scriptures, we may well believe, seemed to him so full, and their teaching so interesting.

Baptism.—The effect was rapid and decided. Going on their way, they reached water, near, it would seem (if the Palestine Exploration Society's map is correct), to the modern *Tell Hesy*,* and the eunuch at once proposed to be baptised with Christian baptism. "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?"† Anxious to profess himself openly a disciple of the Lord Jesus, he commanded the chariot to stand still; and the two, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and he baptised him (Acts viii. 36-38). Philip's mission to him had now ended. He had preached unto him Jesus. He had baptised him at his own desire. Then "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." He disappeared as suddenly, or more so, than he had come. The two who had met in the desert never met again on earth. The eunuch continued his homeward journey without deviating from his path by endeavouring to find out Philip. "He saw him no more" is the sacred

* "At Tell Hesy is the only spring for many miles around: a brackish brook trickles down from Tell Nejîleh, where in ancient times it was confined by a massive dam; and at Tell Hesy it is joined by a fine, fresh spring, while the whole of the water is swallowed in the stony wady within a few hundred yards lower, and never reappears" (*Palestine Exploration Fund*, vol. for 1890, p. 161).

† Ver. 37, it is now generally admitted, should be omitted as an interpolation, and not really part of the narrative.

writer's statement, who assigns the following as a reason; "for," as we should read (not, and), "he went on his way rejoicing." Philip had done for him all that he had to do. The eunuch had received what he wanted. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship. He had left that city without any knowledge of Christian truth. He met Philip by the way, had Jesus preached to him, and went home a professed disciple of the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord. Of more than this we have no certain knowledge, so must await a coming day to learn what results, if any, attended him in his country on his return, supposing, as we must, that he sought to spread the Christian faith.

But though about the rest of his path here we can say nothing definite, we know that before the foundation of the world he had been given to the Son by His Father, for Divine choice had been exercised in his favour ere Adam walked the earth (Eph. i. 4). And now as a sheep, one of the flock of the Good Shepherd, he appears on the page of inspired history. "All that which the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me," the Lord had said (John vi. 37). This eunuch, given to Him, did come to Him. But, humanly speaking, how unlikely was that to have taken place! He had visited Jerusalem without, as we may well believe, coming across any of the Apostles, or coming under the power of their teaching. He was returning home to Ethiopia, where certainly no Christian teachers or preachers were yet to be found. He was leaving behind him the land in which alone as yet the light of Christian truth was shining. But the Shepherd's eye was on him, and the Spirit directed Philip to speak to him. Then it was discovered that he was one of the sheep for whom the Good Shepherd had given His life; and though as a eunuch he could never of old have been admitted into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. xxiii. 1), he could be, and was, admitted into the assembly of God and of Christ.

Judæa evangelised.—Of Philip we learn a little more.

He was found at Azotus, the ancient Ashdod, situated north of Gaza. He had travelled north-west from Tell Hesy, whilst the eunuch continued his journey south-west from that place towards Gaza. From Azotus Philip worked his way northward, preaching the Gospel in all the cities till he reached Cæsarea. Samaria and Judæa had been now evangelised, though there may have been places in each province as yet unvisited. Still the Gospel had been planted in both, and so the fulfilment of the commission entrusted to the disciples (Luke xxiv. 47), and repeated in more detail to the Eleven (Acts i. 8), was being carried out. Further details of the work in these provinces are for the most part withheld, and the historian passes on to the circumstances connected with missionary work among the Gentiles. The record, then, of Philip's evangelistic labours has closed. We read no more of him till the Apostle Paul's visit to Cæsarea on his last journey to Jerusalem before his first imprisonment, when he and his company found a halting-place in Philip's house, who had, we may suppose, definitely taken up his abode in that city, the seat of the Roman government of Judæa (xxi. 8-14). It is not unlikely that our historian then met Philip for the first time, and may have heard from the evangelist's mouth the story of his visit to the desert and of his intercourse with the eunuch.

Great things had been done, wonderful things had been witnessed; yet things more wonderful were to be displayed in the conversion of Saul, and in the immense diffusion of Gospel work in heathen lands.

VII.

SAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY MINISTRY.

ACTS IX. 1-31.

GOD'S grace was to flow out to Gentiles, for the Gospel was to be preached among all nations. Two things, however, were needed for that. The suited and special instrument was to be provided. The kingdom, too, must be opened by the one foreordained for that service. Of the circumstances connected with the call of the first we are now to become acquainted (Acts ix.). After that the service of the second in opening the kingdom will be detailed.

A Hellenistic Jew was to become the Apostle of the Gentiles; and subsequently, in company with Barnabas, who was also of the same class, was selected as a missionary pioneer to work in Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. To a home-born Jew, of the city of Bethsaida, on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, were entrusted the keys of the kingdom of the heavens. He had used them already to admit Jews into the kingdom on the day of Pentecost. He was shortly to use them afresh, to admit Gentiles in the house of the centurion Cornelius at Cæsarea. There seems a fitness in this. Hellenistic Jews might be more suited for evangelising Gentiles, being naturally better acquainted with their ways and modes of thought. A home-born Jew was the fitting instrument to open the door of the kingdom to them, acting in this against Jewish teaching, national feeling, and the habits of a lifetime

(Acts x. 28), but guided in what he did by the Holy Ghost. No one could have suspected Peter of partiality towards Gentiles. Hence he acted under Divine guidance, and for the carrying out of the Divine will.

Answered Prayer.—And now it was to be seen that the dying martyr's prayer was not poured forth in vain. The Lord had asked forgiveness for those who crucified Him, and He had brought on the day of His resurrection the assurance that His prayer was answered, as He commissioned His disciples to preach forgiveness in His name, beginning at Jerusalem. A free, full proclamation should go forth, able to embrace in its merciful announcement every one alive at that time, as well as all on the face of the earth whom in subsequent ages these tidings should reach. Stephen, manifesting the Spirit of Christ, had prayed for His murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Now one who had been prominent in the proceedings at his death was to be taken up in Divine grace to obtain mercy, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. And all the longsuffering was to be shown forth in him, a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on the Lord unto life everlasting (1 Tim. i. 13-16).

Saul's Conversion.—The young man prominent at the martyrdom of Stephen by keeping the clothes of those that were stoning him, had risen unto still greater prominence by his relentless persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. And now, having proved himself a zealous and a willing instrument in the attempt to stamp out the truth in the metropolis, he was to be entrusted at his own request with letters from the high priest to the synagogues at Damascus,* that, if he found any of the way, whether

* Damascus was at this time under Aretas, King of Arabia Nabatæa, granted to him, it is supposed, by the Emperor Caligula; for during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius it had been attached to the province of Syria. "The Jews of the dispersion," writes Lewin (*Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 47), "like oil sprinkled upon a

men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts ix. 1, 2). Such was the purpose of his self-imposed mission.

He went with a company the size of which is wholly unknown to us; nor is there anything in the narrative to determine whether they were journeying on horse or on foot. If any word, however, might cast light on this matter, the statement that the men accompanying him stood speechless (ix. 7), would lead to the supposition that they were journeying on foot, which would be further strengthened by that which follows—that they led Saul by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And since, as Wordsworth notes, Pharisees rarely used horses, it would be quite in keeping with the narrative to suppose that Saul, ardent though he was in his work of exterminating that sect, as he viewed it, which he hated, should have conformed to the general custom, and have travelled on foot.

The distance to be covered from city to city is reckoned at about a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty miles. Days therefore, in any case, must have passed, since

waste of waters, were in daily contact with heathen society without commingling. They had their own religion and their own laws, their own places of worship and their own courts. Their eyes were ever turned towards Jerusalem; and their allegiance to the high priest was testified, not only by the annual remittance to him of a contribution towards the Temple service, but by making him the referee of all their local disputes. Thus the High Priest and Elders of the Holy City exercised the same sort of spiritual supremacy over the synagogues of the adjacent countries, as the pope and cardinals have since assumed over the Churches in communion with Rome. They promulgated edicts, and had a jurisdiction over their own people to the extent of excommunication, scourging, and imprisonment. When they had reason to put forth this authority, they despatched ambassadors, called apostles, with mandatory letters to the local synagogues." In Damascus Jews were very numerous, as is attested by the slaughter of ten thousand of them in the city in one hour's time in the days of Nero (Josephus, *Wars*, II. xx. 2). Their synagogues, therefore, must have been many.

he issued forth from Jerusalem, ere his eye could light on the buildings of that ancient city in existence since the days of Abraham, and the goal to which he was pressing forward. One tradition has fixed the site of his conversion at a spot close to the city, just a quarter of an hour's walk distant from it. Willibald, who visited Damascus A.D. 721—727, places it two miles distant. Porter (*Giant Cities of Bashan*, p. 350) places it near a village called Kaukab, about ten miles distant, in accordance with a tradition as old as the time of the Crusades. On the top of a ridge separating the valleys of the Abana and Pharpar, "the spot from which the traveller from the south obtains his first view of Damascus," he locates the scene of the conversion.

Damascus was called by its own poets "The Pearl of the East." "The view," writes Porter, "of the city and plain from the brow of Lebanon is unequalled in Syria—probably it is unsurpassed in the world. One gazes upon it enraptured when before him; and when far away, though long years have intervened, memory dwells upon it as upon some bright and joyous vision of childhood's happy days. Forty centuries have passed over the city, yet it retains the freshness of youth. Its palaces look as gorgeous, its houses as gay, its gold-tipped minarets and domes as bright, as if only completed yesterday. Its gardens and orchards and far-reaching groves, rich in foliage and blossoms, wrap the city round like a mantle of green velvet powdered with pearls. Its rivers, better yet than all the waters of Israel, having burst their mountain barriers, send a thousand streams meandering over its plain, sparkling in the sunlight, and spreading verdure and beauty along their course." * Such is the effect produced by the view of Damascus from a little distance. Had Saul just feasted his eyes on it, enraptured with its beauty? We know not. But another sight he was to behold, far brighter

* *Giant Cities of Bashan*, p. 342.

than anything earth could furnish—a sight confined to himself, yet one for ever after deeply impressed on his memory.

For suddenly, about noon—the sun, we may suppose, shining on the city in its meridian splendour—a light shone round about him and his company above the brightness of that sun. All saw the light (Acts xxii. 9), but the rest saw no one. All heard a voice (ix. 7), but Saul only understood the meaning of it (xxii. 9). It addressed him in the Hebrew tongue. Speechless the rest stood, hearing a sound, but seeing no man. So writes the historian. But Paul, recounting the matter before Festus and Agrippa, states that all had fallen to the earth before he heard the voice speaking to him (xxvi. 14),—an apparent discrepancy which, had we been present, would doubtless have admitted of an easy explanation. And we may offer one drawn from the narrative. Startled by the light, and hearing a voice to them unintelligible, for which they could not account, the company might well have stood speechless, as arrested suddenly in their course: the next moment, prostrate on the ground, the conversation between the Lord Jesus and Saul took place.*

To Saul the sound was not only audible, but intelligible. "Saul, Saul!" He was addressed by name. One unknown to him was calling to him out of heaven. He had thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, or the Nazoræan (xxvi. 9). He was acting in all that with a good conscience. Did Heaven approve of his zeal? Was he, like Abraham, to hear words in approbation of his conduct? The critical moment to decide that had now come. The question of Heaven's approval, or the reverse, was to be settled once

* What they heard was a voice (ix. 7); but its sound conveyed no meaning to them,—just as in John xii. 29 the people, who heard the Father's voice, thought it was thunder. So Acts ix. 7 and xxii. 9 are not contradictory.

and for ever, by words which must have come like a thunderbolt. "Why persecutest thou Me?" Who thus spoke to him? Who would suppose that Saul could be guilty of such folly as to persecute One in heaven? A question from Saul, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and an immediate reply, "I am Jesus, the Nazoræan, whom thou persecutest" (xxii. 8), left no doubt in his mind as to the sinfulness of his course. The Lord Jesus indeed was in heaven, and Saul was prostrate before *Him* on the ground. Light above the brightness of the sun had shone round Saul and his company. Light now shone into Saul's soul. His past course and his purposes stood out as in bold relief, but in a blackness which nothing that he could say could lessen. As a convicted persecutor of the Lord Jesus, he lay stretched on the ground. Moreover, he had seen Him. He had heard Him (Acts ix. 17, 27, xxii. 14, 15, xxvi. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 1). And, as we learn from the Apostle's address before Festus and Agrippa, he was told, whilst still on the ground, of the commission with which he was to be entrusted (Acts xxvi. 16-18). An Apostle by calling (Rom. i. 1), he received his commission direct from the Lord, and from Him in glory.

In the first account of his conversion, that given us by St. Luke (Acts ix), the commission is unnoticed, and we should really omit from the record the following words: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him." The passage should simply run: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; but arise, and go," etc. Possibly some copyist inserted those clauses from the two accounts given of his conversion by the Apostle himself—the one when on the stairs of the castle at Jerusalem (xxii.), the other when before the Roman governor and officials of the province at Cæsarea (xxvi.). That the Lord did say, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," St. Paul declared at Cæsarea.

That he asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" we know from his address to the multitude of Jews, when making his defence unto them from the stairs leading up to the castle of Antonia. And each has its place suitably where it is found. The Gentiles at Cæsarea would understand the simile of kicking against the ox-goad, for it is said to be a Greek proverb. The Jews at Jerusalem ought to have understood how natural was the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" when the Lord had personally appeared to him. And they ought to have felt how morally impossible it was for Paul, thus arrested in his course, to do aught else than to obey the One who had spoken to him out of heaven.

On the ground, and in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and with the charge of persecuting Him twice affirmed, Saul had no excuse to offer, nor anything to urge in mitigation of punishment. To have been struck off the earth into everlasting perdition would not have been contrary to the principles of righteousness. He had been arrested, as we might say, *flagrante delicto—i.e.*, in the commission of the crime. Instead, however, of receiving his deserts, he was to learn, as assuredly he had never learnt, what Divine grace could do, and what it is to be oneself a subject of that grace, as he now heard from the lips of the Lord Jesus, in whose presence he really was, of the mercy and of the grace in store for him,—of the *mercy*, seeing that he was not to receive the due reward of his deeds; of the *grace*, in that he was to be entrusted with preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And the words, "But arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (ix. 6), coupled with the further communication, whilst still on the ground, as related in xxvi. 16-18, gave him the first but how full an intimation of the great favour in store for him.

What must it have been to him to hear that soul-

comforting command, "Arise, and go into the city," etc. The penalty of immediate death, with everlasting perdition to follow, was not to be meted out to him. Little wonder, then, is it that he could write in after-years, with this event of his life vividly in remembrance, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all the longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 15, 16). We have said "all the longsuffering," as being more exact than the rendering of the Authorised Version. Do any ask what was all the longsuffering? The Apostle's course at this time, as summed up by himself in three significant words, explains it: "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious" (1 Tim. i. 13). Significant words, we say. For the first is one of the sins characteristic of the last days (2 Tim. iii. 2). The second is what specially characterised the Jews in apostolic times (1 Thess. ii. 15). The last, "injurious," is met with in the New Testament as a sin of the heathen world (Rom. i. 30), being translated in the Authorised Version "despiteful," and in the Revised Version "insolent." None of the heathen in that chapter of Romans are charged with blaspheming. No one in 2 Tim. iii., where the characteristic marks of the last days are given, is called "injurious." But all three together characterised Saul. Clearly, then, could he write of the Lord Jesus showing forth in him "all the longsuffering."

Obeying the command to rise up, he had strength to walk, but could not see, having been blinded by the dazzling glory of the light from heaven. So led by his companions by the hand he entered the city. They had seen the light, but were not blinded. He only had seen the Lord Jesus on that occasion. Starting forth as he had done on his journey like an inquisitor, and thinking doubtless that the Christians at Damascus would fall an easy prey, as so many

in Jerusalem had done, he entered the city as a captive really, and led by the hand till he reached the house of Judas, who lived in the long street which then and still traverses the city from east to west, and was then and is yet called "Straight." He entered with the letters from the high priest authenticating his commission. He never delivered them, for that commission was superseded by another just received, and one with which he could not refuse compliance. And the sheep apparently so helpless, and which had never struck one blow in their own defence, Saul found had a defender, a guardian, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was really in heaven.

Divine Guidance.—Blind, and fasting for three days and three nights, he remained in the house of his host. Of visitors, of condoling friends surrounding him, we read not a word. To One, however, he could and did open out. Saul, the persecutor, prayed to God in heaven. Nor was it one solitary petition, poured forth in the agony of his soul, or wrung from him by great mental torture. "He prayeth," we learn. Blind as he was, and without food, he was engaged in prayer. What his feelings were during that never-to-be-forgotten time neither the historian nor the Apostle himself has thought fit to place on record. But what is of deep interest and profit to us all is circumstantially detailed. We learn how the Lord was working with him on the one hand, and with Ananias on the other. Saul was prepared for the visit of Ananias. Ananias was charged by the Lord to visit the captive in the house of Judas. We have seen in chap. viii. how the Spirit provided for the instruction of the eunuch. We shall see in chap. x. how Cornelius was prepared for the visit of Peter, and how Peter was told of the journey he should undertake. So was it with Ananias and with Saul. How interesting and instructive is this!—interesting, as it unfolds a little of the inner working of the movement; instructive, as it teaches us how hearts were prepared and

steps guided in those days. Something analogous to this is at times, when called for, experienced still.

Ananias.—The Lord's eye was on Saul. Nor was that all. He gave him the hope of shortly regaining his eyesight. For the very man by whose instrumentality it was to be restored he had seen coming in, and his name, too, was revealed, though hitherto a perfect stranger to this stricken one. And now to that servant the Lord spoke in a vision, addressing him by name, as He had personally addressed Saul. Yet how great the difference! To Saul it was One previously unknown to him who spoke. To Ananias it was One with whom that disciple was well acquainted. "Ananias," said the Lord. "Behold, I am here, Lord," was the ready response. "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen* a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hands on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts ix. 10-12). Who besides the Lord then knew that Saul was praying? Which of the Christians in Damascus had heard of his conversion? Seemingly none. His purpose in visiting the city was well known, as also his previous conduct at Jerusalem. But probably of the manner of his entrance into Damascus, led by the hand, and seeing nothing (rather than, no man), had not been mooted abroad. His sympathisers in his mission would not be the first to proclaim it. Had he become a disciple of Christ? Could it be said of him, as of his namesake of old, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Ananias at first could not credit it. He answered therefore, reminding the Lord of Saul's past career and of his avowed purpose in visiting Damascus. Permitted to express himself fully, the Lord replied, and

* "In a vision," ver. 12, should be omitted. The street called *Straight* still exists, it is said. "The old city is oval in shape." "Its greatest diameter is marked by the *Straight Street*, which is an English mile in length" (Porter, *Giant Cities of Bashan* p. 349).

told him that the former persecutor was a chosen vessel to bear His name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. Let the reader remark that Gentiles are first named, constituting as they did Paul's special sphere of ministry (Rom. xi. 13). His conversion, too, would be attested as real by the sufferings for Christ's sake that he should thereafter endure.

What freedom of intercourse was permitted between the Lord in heaven and His servants on earth! Ananias spoke freely of that which he had heard about Saul. Peter at Joppa as freely expressed himself, when told to "rise, slay, and eat" (Acts x. 14). And Paul in xxii. 19, 20 without reserve showed surprise at the Lord's command for him to leave Jerusalem, because the Jews would not receive his testimony to Christ. Wisdom and knowledge are with Him. His servants, submissive to His will, in each case carried out the wishes of the Master, though at first in opposition to their thoughts. Peter went unhesitatingly with the three men, bound for Cæsarea. Paul left Jerusalem. And Ananias visited Saul of Tarsus in the house of Judas, in the street called Straight.

What a meeting that was! Saul, who but lately would have arrested Ananias and have carried him bound to Jerusalem, was visited by this disciple of Christ, that through him he might receive the restoration of his eyesight. Scales, as it were, fell from his eyes. The power of vision was restored. And now he willingly hearkened like a docile child to Ananias, when told to arise, and be baptised, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts xxii. 16). Without delay, he was baptised, and called upon the name of the Lord, and so washed away his sins. We need here scarcely remind the reader that the rite of baptism does not procure forgiveness of our sins before God. Nothing but the blood of Christ can do that (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; Heb. ix. 22). Saul, however, by what he did, taking his place outwardly as a disciple by

baptism, and calling on the name of the Lord, thus openly confessing Him, thoroughly broke with the past and condemned his whole course. Had he not called on the name of the Lord, would his sins have been washed away? That result was closely connected with his open acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ in that double way.

Saul was the first of those numbered among the Apostles of whose baptism we read. Already a quickened soul before Ananias visited him, he was to be enrolled amongst the disciples of Christ in the appointed way for all who should believe on Him subsequent to His death. As baptised, Saul was now buried with Christ (Rom. vi. 4), and thus was professedly in His company who had really died. Further, as Ananias told him, he was to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and so be fitted for the special service to which he was called. What passed between the two, beyond the few words recorded in Acts ix. 17, supplemented as they are by the Apostle's account of the interview in xxii. 13-16, we shall never know on earth. Yet that interview, we may be sure, must have been one of intense interest to both. Ananias for the first time saw and conversed in peace with the formerly notorious persecutor of the Church of God. Saul, when his sight returned, saw before him one of that hitherto hated sect on the extermination of which he had been bent. And with the facts and the experience of the past few days fresh in his recollection, we may well suppose that he spoke of his remarkable conversion, and of the grace of which he was so striking an example, opening up his mind to Ananias, with whom, as a disciple of their now common Master, he was henceforth to be openly associated. A change indeed had passed over him. What he had seen and heard had wrought a mighty revolution within. He was converted.

Here, ere pursuing the history, we must pause to notice two points: the Lord's question to Saul, and the Lord's announcement to Ananias, foretelling Saul's future service.

The Body of Christ.—"Why persecutest thou Me?" was the question. But Saul had never seen Him. How could he on earth persecute One in heaven? A truth, a revelation, was contained in that question. It was the first inkling of the existence of the Body of Christ, and came, as was fitting, from the Head Himself. *Me*, He said—not *My people*, *My saints*, but *Myself*. For now was to be known that all believers on the Lord Jesus, recipients of the Holy Ghost, are members of His Body. To Saul this revelation was first vouchsafed (Eph. iii. 3). And in his writings, and in them alone, do we learn about it. The Church is Christ's Body (Eph. i. 23, v. 30; Col. i. 24), which is formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13). It grows, it increases, by the different members performing each their proper functions (Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19); and it is built up (or, edified) by the ministry of the Word, through the individuals given as gifts from Christ to men (Eph. iv. 11, 12). And those once Gentiles, with those once Jews, but all believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, together compose it. This was part of the mystery made known to the Apostle Paul (Eph. iii. 6). Saints of the Old Testament were viewed as the Apple of Jehovah's eye (Deut. xxxii. 10). Saints of the New Testament, composing the Church, are all members of the Body of Christ. Christ, then, was persecuted because His members were persecuted, just as an injury to any part of one's own body is an injury to oneself. Over His members the Head in heaven had now thrown His shield. And Saul learnt, and all should learn, that the persecution of Christians, helpless as they may be, is no light thing in the Lord's eyes. They are part of His Body.

Saul's Special Service.—Saul had profited (or, advanced) in the Jews' religion above many his equals (or, of his own age) in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal. i. 14). No one would have credited him with any predilection for Gentiles.

His zeal for the Law and for Jewish traditions was unquestionable. Yet he was the vessel chosen to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles and kings, as well as the people of Israel. He had thus the widest field of service appointed him. Old Simeon had sung of the revelation of Gentiles—*i.e.*, the bringing them out of obscurity—as part of the fruit of the Lord's incarnation (Luke ii. 32). The Lord had told His disciples of other sheep which He had, not of the Jewish fold, and them also He should bring, that there should be one flock and one Shepherd (John x. 16). The man especially selected to forward the work had now near Damascus been converted. Later on the Apostles at Jerusalem recognised Saul's special call, in company with Barnabas, to that field of labour (Gal. ii. 7-9). And he writes of himself as an Apostle of Gentiles (Rom. xi. 13). To his own countrymen he could and did preach; but service to them is mentioned last in the Lord's word to Ananias (Acts ix. 15), though Saul always first addressed himself where possible to those of his own nation. To work amongst the Gentiles was he delivered (or, taken out) from both Jews and Gentiles, and to the last mentioned he was specially sent, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive remission of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts xxvi. 17, 18) The great champion for the faith now stands out before us.

Preparation for Service.—Enrolled by baptism as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and strengthened by food after the long time of abstinence, a season of quiet and retirement would come very opportune. This was provided by a short sojourn in Arabia. At this point the chronological arrangement of his history has been questioned. He certainly visited Arabia before he went up to Jerusalem, and as certainly returned to Damascus after the sojourn in retirement in Arabia. Viewing the account he gives us of this chapter in his life, we would place it just after his

conversion, and before any public ministry, or even intercourse with the disciples in Damascus. For we read, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; immediately I *conferred not with flesh and blood*: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus" (Gal. i. 15-17). His Gospel was not received from man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. i. 11, 12). Alone, then, with God, he was prepared for his remarkable service, and from the Lord Himself he received by revelation the Gospel which he preached. Now silence on the part of Luke as to this visit to Arabia need excite no surprise. He must have been aware of it as an historical fact; for the Apostle had, several years before the Acts was compiled, notified this to the Galatians. But as it furnished no record of evangelistic labours, though a prelude to them, the historian may well have passed it over.

Earliest Labours.—Returning, as we believe, from Arabia, Saul consorted with the disciples in Damascus, and that apparently before he preached in the synogogues (Acts ix. 19).* Now this would be quite in character with his private interview with the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem fourteen years later, when, in company with Barnabas, he communicated privately to them of reputation the Gospel which he preached. The active and notorious persecutor as he had been, intercourse with the disciples, to convince them of his conversion, and it may be to communicate to them the Gospel he was about to preach, would have been but consistent conduct. Soon, however, he was to stand forth openly and manfully for Christ. In Damascus, where his vigilance as an inquisitor was to have been displayed, there his first attempts in preaching the

* Reading this verse aright, it runs, "And [not, then] was Saul certain days," etc. The fact is stated, but the time is left indefinite.

Gospel were made. *Attempts* shall we call them? Evidently from the outset of his new career the Jews felt they had an antagonist to cope with of no mean order. All his energies, hitherto directed to the stamping out, if possible, of the truth, were now put forth, under the guidance and in the power of the Spirit, to preach that faith amongst the confessors of which he had once made such havoc. A powerful champion he must indeed have been—a Goliath in spiritual power, whom no one in Israel could overthrow or even answer.

The Son of God.—Taught of the Spirit and guided by the Spirit, he preached in the synagogues of Damascus. How many there were we know not. There were clearly several. And Saul in his zeal visited them, seeking out his countrymen where they could best be found. All might hear and learn that a preacher had appeared such as people in Damascus had never before listened to. Power, not eloquence, characterised him (2 Cor. x. 10). And he preached that which, as far as we know, had never been proclaimed by an Apostle before—that Jesus * is the *Son* of God (Acts ix. 20), as well as proving that He is the Christ (22). Peter had proclaimed Him as Lord and Christ at Pentecost (ii.); subsequently he had preached Him as the Prophet of Deut. xviii., as the Servant, as the chief corner stone, as a Prince and Saviour, as well as the Prince of life (iii., iv., v.). Saul now preached Him as the *Son of God.* The very thing for which the Sanhedrin condemned the Lord to death, Saul at Damascus averred was the simple truth. Moreover, that which no other Apostle could say, he could there affirm. He had seen the crucified One in heavenly glory, and had heard words from His mouth. He could therefore present himself to the audience in the different synagogues as the messenger, the Apostle

* "Jesus," *not* "Christ," is here the true reading. The crucified One was the Son of God, a truth of awful import for men who had put Him to death.

of the Lord Jesus who is in glory. God, he tells us, had revealed His Son in him (Gal. i. 16). As the Son of God he therefore proclaimed Him, though as yet only to the Jews.

Opposition.—The Apostle of the Gentiles was indeed in Damascus, but the kingdom of heaven was to be opened to them by Peter. Till that took place the work went on amongst Jews and proselytes. And now Saul's powerful preaching was of that positive kind which affected his hearers. Amazement at first took possession of them. All knew his course in Jerusalem, and the intent for which he had started for Damascus. All had to witness of the marked and mighty change wrought in him. But as his preaching proceeded amazement gave place in some to intense hostility; so, after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him, and they watched the city gates day and night for that purpose. All their enmity went out against him; none else were molested nor their lives threatened. But he, the renegade as they must have viewed him, and the pungent preacher, whose teaching that Jesus was the Christ they could not successfully controvert, must be silenced in some way or another. His life must be taken, if nothing could stop him.

In some, we have said, intense hostility was engendered. Others who had listened had profited by his labour, and were now ranked as "his disciples" as we should read (Acts ix. 25). These rallied round him, and by them being let down in a basket from a window on the wall at night he defeated the vigilance of his enemies. How soon he had to learn something of the great things he was to suffer for Christ's sake! "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," had been the Lord's words to the Eleven (John xv. 20). Saul early proved their truth, yet surely his feelings must have differed in measure from those of the Eleven in like circumstances. He could not forget what he had been, nor the sorrow and the havoc he had

caused by persecutions, which on earth could never be repaired.

Leaving Damascus like a fugitive, thus escaping apprehension at the hands of the Ethnarch,* the governor under Aretas (2 Cor. xi. 32, 33), he made his way to Jerusalem, desirous, as he tells us, to visit Peter, of whom he must often have heard, but as yet knew him not. Three years, we learn (Gal. i. 18), had passed since he had issued forth from the metropolis, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. What eventful years to him! Now he re-entered the city very likely alone, but a Christian and an ardent champion for the faith. He returned with the mission on which he started unfulfilled, but he returned with a far grander mission. He had sought letters from the high priest. He received them. He returned with a mandate from One in glory. To discover Christians in Damascus, and to bring them bound to Jerusalem, had been his mandate, the range of his commission being confined to that city. To open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God—these were the purposes for which he was now commissioned. And world-wide was to be his sphere. Was he, then, returning as a discredited messenger, or Apostle.† He was coming back an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned, as no one else ever was, directly from the Lord Himself in glory, though at first an object of suspicion to the disciples in Jerusalem. For it would seem as if no word of his conversion had reached the ears

* Who was the Ethnarch? According to Lewin (vol. i., p. 72), he was the chief officer of the Jews in the city, to whom Aretas, King of Arabia, had delegated supreme power over that people. According to others, he was Procurator under Aretas, but not a Jew. The conduct of the Jews, watching the gates day and night, would favour the first supposition. Were the guards (2 Cor. xi. 32) the Jews mentioned in the Acts?

† Messengers from the high priest on ecclesiastical matters were called *Apostles*, the reader may remember. See note, p. 119.

of the Apostles. Of his labours, too, in Damascus they seem to have been in profound ignorance, till Barnabas, taking him by the hand, made them acquainted with his conversion, and with the proofs of it in his evangelistic labours and controversial encounters; for he had seen the Lord who had spoken to him, and he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus (Acts ix. 27).

The testimony of Barnabas was enough. Satisfied, then, as to the reality of his conversion, Saul was admitted freely to the company of the Christians in the city. He who had once entered houses as an inquisitor was now received as a brother in the faith. But between him and Barnabas there was thus early formed a special tie; and the latter evidently was conscious of the teaching powers of the former, and highly valued them (xi. 25, 26). Only a short stay did he make—just a fortnight abiding with Peter. It was, however, a time of active service. For he preached boldly in the name of the Lord, as well as disputed against the Hellenists—*i.e.*, the Grecian Jews—just the class against whom Stephen had witnessed. But as with Stephen, so with Saul: when argument availed not, force was to be used. So they went about to kill him. This coming to the cognisance of the disciples, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. What love did they manifest—his past hostility all forgiven! Many years later he must have travelled probably the same road to Cæsarea, to escape again death at the hand of the Jews. On this first occasion he was escorted by disciples; on the second he was carried by Roman troops, and as their prisoner. How he went from Cæsarea to Tarsus is not told us. That he reached it, his native city, we learn from Acts xi. 25. Judging, however, from Gal. i. 21, he traversed Syria to reach Cilicia. Much more might we have learnt had it been profitable for us to know it. The fortnight with Peter (Gal. i. 18), full surely of interest, these two making acquaintance whose

labours figure so largely in the Acts, might have furnished a chronicler with much to record. Had Luke been a chronicler he might have dilated on it. But, the penman of the Holy Spirit, he presents rather the features of the great movement of his day, than details, interesting as they might have been.

A Pause.—Of a breathing-time in the midst of conflict we next learn. "The Church [not, Churches] had rest [or, peace] throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied" (Acts ix. 31). The efforts of the ecclesiastical power seemed exhausted. Of such we hear no more for a long time. And now, with Saul away from Jerusalem, the enmity of the Jews became somewhat dormant. Rest or peace the Church knew, and progress was made in the work. Here for the first time do we read of Christian work having gone on in Galilee. The Church, first planted in the metropolis of Judaism, and amongst the most bigoted and determined opponents of the faith in the land, had nevertheless spread throughout it from south to north, and had already penetrated into Syria. Companies of believers were therefore already found in different towns and villages, each an assembly in itself (Gal. i. 22); yet the whole collectively formed but one assembly, or Church, as the historian carefully records, writing, as we have remarked above, "Then had *the Church*," etc. For in two aspects can the Church be viewed as wholly on earth,—in a *local* aspect, comprising then only the professing Christians in any given place; and also in a *general* aspect, embracing all believers here below irrespective of their different localities. In a still wider aspect is it also viewed—viz., as embracing the whole number of Christians who will compose the Body of Christ. In this last aspect it can never, of course, be fully seen on earth.

Rest enjoyed, increase followed. Outward persecution

ceasing, by the enemy for a time laying aside that weapon, the Spirit of God, however, did not pause in His work. For the assembly, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied. Persecution had failed to uproot the Church. Now, of the conditions under which it multiplied we are informed. Christian life was active in its members. The truth worked *on* them and *in* them. Ministry in the power and under the guidance of the Spirit was in exercise, and increase was the happy result. And surely there must have been then exhibited, what should still be displayed, the fruits of real ministry in the edifying of the assembly, and the increase of the whole by each member of the Body performing its appointed function (Eph. iv. 11-13, 16 ; Col. ii. 19).

A Crisis.—A crisis had been reached, and peace and increase took the place of harassing persecution and scattering of the disciples. Critical times there have been in the history of the movement. The first was experienced on the day of the Lord's crucifixion. All hopes formed by the disciples of the redemption of Israel, by Him whom they had regarded as the Messiah, were dashed to the ground. But God raised Him from the dead, and their hopes revived, accompanied, through the coming of the Holy Ghost, with an intelligence about matters to which they had been hitherto strangers. A second crisis in the history of the movement arrived. The Christians, like defenceless sheep, seemed at the mercy of the persecutor, now bent on stamping out, if possible, the truth committed to them to maintain. But had God given His saints over to destruction? Just when the persecutor must have thought himself sure of his prey in Damascus, the Lord converted him, and the great opponent on earth became a most gifted and earnest champion for the faith. Later on another crisis was reached, when in a different way the work was imperilled. Judaising principles were at work. Peter was led away ; and even Barnabas, who had hitherto

stood firm, was drawn aside by dissimulation. The true Gospel of the grace of God hung in the balance. Was it to be surrendered altogether or not? The steadfastness of one man—Paul—preserved the faith then, and for succeeding generations; so that the truth of the Gospel continued (Gal. ii.). Critical times those were. Critical times, too, have since the Apostles' days been known. But as then, so still, God has come in, and preserved that which was in danger of being surrendered. To one other instance will we just advert. At one time it seemed as if the error of Arius concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus were prevailing, but the faithfulness of Athanasius, notwithstanding the defection of some who had once stood firm, never wavered, and thus the truth was preserved. To quote the words of Hooker, "The whole world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against it; half a hundred of years spent in doubtful trial which of the two in the end would prevail,—the side which had all, or else the part which had no friend but God and death; the one a defender of his innocency, the other a finisher of all his troubles" (*Eccles. Polity*, V. xlii. 5). By Athanasius under God the truth then attacked was preserved to the Church of God.

Critical times do arrive. But the watchfulness of our God is unceasing. Such crises show the determination of the enemy on the one hand, but the faithfulness of God and the presence and power of the Spirit on the other. Let us be faithful to the teaching of the Word, for the truth will assuredly prevail, and what may seem to be a losing fight will turn out to be a winning one.

The lull in the storm noted affords us a moment to survey what had been achieved. In Jerusalem the work began by the preaching of Peter. In Galilee, Judæa, Samaria, it was carried on. Assemblies in different places existed. To Syria and Cilicia it was spreading, and a convert had returned to Ethiopia with a knowledge of Christ and of the Gospel of God. The movement was

taking root wherever it had spread. But would it hold its own when brought against Gentile culture and civilisation? Would it change the current of many a life in heathen lands, and, face to face with that great centre of idolatry at Ephesus, have to record a march of triumph unparalleled in the history of Judaism? We shall see. Meanwhile we may note that neither fanaticism nor religious zeal could arrest its course. It rolled on like a mighty river, which mocks at puny efforts to stem its tide or divert its current.

VIII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS OPENED TO GENTILES.

ACTS IX. 32—XI. 18.

FROM the movements of Saul we are now turned to those of Peter in connection with that remarkable journey, which resulted in the opening of the kingdom of the heavens to Gentiles. This was service specially delegated to him by the Lord. And, foretold in Matthew (xvi. 19), he now carried it out under the special direction of the Holy Ghost (Acts x. 19, 20, xi. 12), God having made choice by him, as he subsequently stated (xv. 7), that the Gentiles should first hear from his mouth the Gospel of sovereign grace. The time for the development of this purpose was now at hand, though as yet no one on earth was aware of it.

Peter's New Journey.—We have read (viii.) of Peter and John visiting and evangelising in Samaria. We are now to read of Peter itinerating alone in Judæa, the spread of the work doubtless necessitating such a service. Itinerancy was commenced by the Lord (Mark i. 39; Luke viii. 1, xiii. 22), and was carried on by the Apostles Peter and Paul. We mention them only, because the labours of the others, a little of John's excepted, are to us wholly unknown; for the history of the Acts was not intended to be a chronicle of all that went on, nor indeed to furnish the biography of any of the early Christians. We know from chapter viii. 1 that the Apostles had

remained at Jerusalem, when the disciples were scattered abroad at the persecution which arose about Stephen. But what the rest did, or where any of them were, when Saul as a Christian and Peter's guest returned to Jerusalem, save indeed James the Lord's brother (Gal. i. 19), we have now no means of ascertaining. Very probably none of them finally left Jerusalem for distant fields of labour till Gentiles had been admitted into the kingdom at Cæsarea. The spread of the work in the Holy Land, consequent on the dispersion of the disciples, may have provided till then sufficient scope for the energies and service of them all. And we may be sure that none of them were idle: all were workers.

Incidents of the Journey.—Peter now went forth alone. Why we know not. But all can understand how fitting that was, since in the striking event of this journey he was the only Apostle who could have part. Ere, however, accomplishing that great purpose, the power of the name of Christ was to be remarkably manifested, and the power of prayer was to be proved. The former was displayed in the healing of Æneas; the latter was seen in the raising of Tabitha from the dead.

Lydda.—At Lydda Peter halted. This town was situated in the plain of Ono, which debouches on that of Sharon, and is on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa. Christianity had reached it before the Apostle's visit, for he went down, we are told, to the saints there. Æneas, a paralysed man, and bedridden for eight years, was in the place, but whether he was already a Christian is not definitely stated. "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole [or, healeth thee]: arise, and make thy bed." Such was the apostolic utterance, giving all theg lory, ascribing all the power to the crucified One. Restored thus to health and strength, like the palsied man in Mark ii., without passing through any period of convalescence, all could witness that vitality reanimated his enfeebled frame. But,

differing from that case in the Gospel, Æneas was healed by Peter in the name of Christ, whereas in the house at Capernaum the Lord healed the man by virtue of His own power. He was the Master; Peter was the servant. At Lydda the *name* of Christ was all-powerful, as before in Capernaum the *word* of Christ had been sufficient. In that name in the Temple court the lame man had been healed (Acts iii.). By virtue of that same name the paralysed limbs of Æneas now received strength, so that he could walk and make his bed. The God of Israel was still dispensing blessings to individuals among His ancient people, though only in the name of the rejected but exalted Saviour. The fame of this miracle quickly spread. All that dwelt in Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and (rather, who) turned to the Lord. Seeing what had taken place, they turned to the Lord. Æneas could rejoice in his regained liberty of motion. The country-side, as one might say, as well as the townspeople, reaped blessing likewise. Conversions were very numerous.

Joppa.—Nine miles farther on, and lying on the sea-coast, was Joppa, now Jaffa, the seaport of Jerusalem in old days (2 Chron. ii. 16), the seaport for her still. Here dwelt a certain disciple named Tabitha, an Aramaic word signifying a *gazelle*, the Greek equivalent of which is Dorcas. She had been a woman active in good works and alms-deeds, spending time, strength, and substance in making garments for the poor. But death had claimed her: her active life was apparently over. A calamity had befallen the recipients of her charity. Weeping and wailing now occupied them; but neither the one nor the other, nor both together, could induce the iron hand of death to relax its grasp. The chamber of death might resound with lamentations—the dead one heard them not. Death heeded them not; nothing short of the intervention of Divine power could restore Tabitha to life. But to none save Apostles do we read of such power having been by the Lord entrusted (Matt. x. 8). No such power was given to the Seventy

(Luke x.), nor does the Lord in Mark xvi. endow disciples with it. Christians, then, in Joppa could not raise the dead. Who on earth could?

Peter's visit to Lydda had become well known, and his presence there seemed timely. So to him they turned, sending two men to ask him to visit them without delay. He went with the messengers. Entering the chamber of death, and now alone with the corpse and with God (for he put out all the widows present, who were showing him the garments Dorcas had made), he fell on his knees in prayer. The Lord could command the dead to rise: He did so at Nain. Peter owned he had no such inherent power. Like Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 22), and like Elisha (2 Kings iv. 33), however, he prayed, and restoration to life was the result. "Tabitha, arise," were his words. Tabitha opened her eyes and sat up. Life and power had returned to the body; and the Apostle had the joy of presenting her alive to the weeping widows and sorrowing disciples. Peter's next stage was to land him at Cæsarea.

Miracles.—Most striking miracles have been wrought, which in their order may remind us of the Lord's history in the seventh chapter of Luke. There disease was first removed, then death had to relax its grasp, life being restored to the widow of Nain's son. After that forgiveness of sins was accorded to the woman in Simon's house and openly proclaimed; so Peter had healed the sick and raised the dead, and next was to preach full forgiveness of sins to all who believed on the Lord Jesus. But for that he must proceed to Cæsarea. A word, however, here as to miracles before passing on. Such are signs that God is working, and at times are characteristic marks of the commencement of a new dispensation. With miracles the Mosaic dispensation was inaugurated, a dispensation of law, not of grace; so the character of those wrought by Moses in Egypt were for the most part judicial, thus in keeping with law, which deals with people in accordance with their works. But the

character of the miracles with which the present dispensation was ushered in, as far as we read of them, was for the most part that of grace, meeting the needs of people, and removing sorrow and suffering. And since the exercise of such powers attests that God is working, we can understand why the Apostles and early Christians, as Stephen and Philip, were empowered to do them—a striking testimony, as done in the name of the Lord Jesus and by His servants, of the guilt of the Jews in rejecting Him on the one hand, and of the grace of God in ministering to people on the other.

Whilst, however, a dispensation may be inaugurated by such exhibitions of Divine power, it by no means follows that they will continue in exercise throughout it, though for a definite testimony they may be again exhibited. So we read of John that he did no miracle (John x. 41). He lived at the close of the Mosaic dispensation, as we do towards the close of the Christian. Between Moses, however, and John miracles had a marked place in the histories of Elijah and of Elisha. Theirs was the time of Israel's apostasy. God then worked by those two prophets to show Himself to be the one true, living, self-existing God. So in a coming day, when apostasy under the beast and his minister, the false prophet, will be rife, miraculous powers will be wielded by the two witnesses then raised up on behalf of the truth in Jerusalem (Rev. xi. 6).

Cornelius.—To return. The Lord Jesus by His death, as John tells us in his Gospel (xi. 52), would gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. The carrying out of this purpose was now to commence through the call of Gentiles, for among them there were sheep of Christ (John x. 16). Of these Cornelius, a Roman centurion of the Italian band,* with others of his household

* "The Italian band consisted of Italians, not of natives of the country, like many other Roman troops in Syria. Such a Roman auxiliary corps was appropriately stationed at the place where the

and his acquaintance, were part. Already born of God, for he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people [*i.e.*, Jews], and prayed to God alway"; yet, notwithstanding those evident tokens of his spiritual life, he had no recognised place at the children's table. For, like the Syrophœnician woman, he did not by natural birth belong to the favoured nation. Now, however, it was to be known, and definitely understood, that the middle wall of partition, raised up by God, had by Divine command been broken down for all who should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in the present dispensation. For Christ by His death has "abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, making peace, and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. ii. 15, 16).

Two Visions.—But for this to be brought about Peter and Cornelius must meet, and the latter be evangelised by the former. A Jew and a Gentile to meet! Who could arrange that? Who could persuade Peter to consent to it? God must do it. By a vision Cornelius learnt that he was to send for Peter. By a vision Peter learnt that with unquestioning heart he was to go with the messengers from Cornelius.

An angel appeared to Cornelius when engaged in prayer at the ninth hour, that hour so long consecrated to the offering of the evening sacrifice on the altar, and known at Jerusalem as the hour of prayer (Acts iii. 1). God, the centurion learnt, known to Israel as Jehovah of Hosts, had observed and cared for the Gentile soldier. Grace had really reached him in the bestowal of spiritual life, though he was neither an Israelite nor a proselyte to the

Procurator had his residence, for the maintenance of tranquillity (Meyer). Julius, the centurion to whose custody Paul was committed to sail for Rome, was of the Augustan band (Acts xxvii. 1).

Jewish religion. His prayers had been heard, his alms to the Jews (x. 2) had been carefully noted, and both had gone up for a memorial before God (4). Never before had a heavenly visitant appeared in that house. So Cornelius was at first affrighted, and asked, "What is it, Lord?" The purpose of the visit was soon declared, for short, though distinct, was the communication made. "Thy prayers and thine alms are come [or, gone] up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside" (4-6).* Here the communication as given by Luke really stopped.—the words "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" being generally viewed as an interpolation, as well as the words in ver. 32, "who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee." But there was an addition to the record of the historian, which is supplied by Peter in xi. 14, furnished to him, as he states, by Cornelius—"who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." This elucidates a very important subject, to which we must refer later on.

With soldierlike obedience Cornelius prepared to carry out the instructions just received. He would send for Peter that very day. Simon surnamed Peter lodged with one Simon a tanner, whose house was by the seaside. Saul was to be found by Ananias in the street of Damascus called Straight, and in the house of one Judas, who doubtless was not a Christian. Peter's address at this time was the house of a Christian, Simon the tanner, by the seaside. Ananias had no difficulty in finding Saul. The messengers of Cornelius as readily found the house and the man to whom they were sent. The Shepherd knows the sheep. The Holy Ghost can direct as to the locality and the house in which they will be found. Strangers some may be to

* "The tanner, on account of his trade, dwelt by the sea, and probably apart from the city, to which his house belonged" (Meyer).

those on earth immediately around them. If saints, they are, however, under the watchful eye of One in heaven—a comfort for any in such a position on earth.

Cæsarea.—The dwelling-place of Cornelius, not mentioned in Old Testament history, owed its existence almost to Herod the Great. It was the headquarters of the Roman governor of Judæa. Magnificently adorned by the king with palaces and large edifices, it was also noted, and that especially, for the haven which he constructed at great cost, and capable of containing large ships. Thus commerce was brought to it; and, as we learn from notices in the Acts, Paul disembarked at it on his second missionary journey (xviii. 22), and embarked at that port for his voyage as a prisoner to Rome (xxvii. 2). Several times mentioned in the Acts, it is never once noticed in the Gospels. And now that city, built at such a cost, we learn is a desolate ruin. "Like the vast fragments of St. Andrews in Scotland," to quote Dean Stanley, its ruins "run out into the waves of the Mediterranean Sea, which dashes over the prostrate columns and huge masses of masonry; but unlike St. Andrews—unlike in this respect to most Eastern ruins—no sign of human habitation is to be found within the circuit of its deserted walls. No village or even hovel remains on the site of what was once the capital of Palestine." * Like an exotic, its roots had not struck deep enough into the soil to secure it enduring vitality, though for a time it continued, being the seat of a Christian bishopric, filled in the fourth century by the Church historian Eusebius, and in later times was a post of the Crusaders. At the time of which we are reading, Christianity must already have found a home within its walls, for Philip the Evangelist had gone there (viii. 40), and perhaps to live (xxi. 8). But though Philip was the appointed instrument to evangelise the eunuch, he was not the one foreordained to minister to Cornelius the salvation he had

* Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 261.

to receive. Peter only could do that. Philip and the centurion were as yet, we must suppose, strangers to each other. So to Joppa the messengers had to journey.

The Second Vision.—The thirty miles that measured the distance between the two towns was well-nigh covered, when Peter, all unconscious of the special work that lay before him, had gone up to the roof of Simon's house to pray. It was about the sixth hour, the hour of noon. The third, the sixth, and the ninth hours were hours of prayer with the Jews. Hungry, and whilst waiting for food to be prepared, he fell into a trance (or, an ecstasy came upon him), a state similar to that in which Paul was in the Temple (xxii. 17) when the Lord appeared to him. The Spirit of God was now about to teach His servant the special service that lay before him. A sheet, as it were, Peter saw let down from heaven by its four corners, containing all manner of four-footed beasts * and creeping things and fowls of the air—clean and unclean beasts, as he would regard them, all mixed together. A strange sight for one brought up in the strict rules of Judaism! But, stranger still, a voice came to him from heaven, saying, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." Impossible, thought the Apostle, to do that. And with that freedom of spirit which we have noticed in Ananias, he remonstrated with the One who addressed him: "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean" (*i.e.*, not only not sanctified for his use, but unclean as well). Again the voice was heard, "What God hath cleansed, that call [or, make] not thou common." Thrice was that done, and immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven (x. 11-16).

The vision was ended, the state of ecstasy passed. Now arose the question, What did that vision mean? Peter's natural hunger had not been appeased. What, then, was

* Luke omits really "wild beasts." Peter in his recital (xi. 6) mentions them.

the lesson intended? Alone on the housetop, to whom could he unburden his mind? Wondering about it, for the application of the vision he had not long to wait. The Spirit spoke to him plainly, and informed him of the coming of the men to seek him. They were already at the gate inquiring for Peter. With them the Holy Ghost told him he was to go, nothing doubting; for "I," he said, "have sent them" (19, 20). God the Holy Ghost was dwelling on earth, and was directing in the progress of the work, opening up now a new, a vast, and a hitherto unsuspected field of labour. He spoke as ordering in this work.

To Cæsarea.—In obedience to the Spirit's word Peter went down, met the men, introduced himself as the one for whom they were asking, and inquired their errand. Now he heard of Cornelius in Cæsarea having been warned by an angel to send for him, to hear words of him (22). Cornelius had been prepared to welcome Peter, and that by name. Peter too was now prepared to go to Cornelius to minister to him. That night passed with the messengers from Cornelius resting after their journey under Simon's roof. On the following day the Apostle set off with them, accompanied by six of the disciples of Joppa. Would a Jew obey the summons of a Gentile? Would Peter enter under his roof? Some might have questioned that. Cornelius, however, did not. Not a shadow of a doubt existed in his mind, and he had reckoned on an immediate response. Nor was he mistaken: Peter appeared as soon as he could well have been there—the fourth day from the visit of the angel—and found a hearty and full reception. The centurion's kinsfolk and near friends were assembled to meet him. What a sight it must have been! Many had come together, and were there present in the sight of God to hear all things that were commanded Peter of the Lord (as we should here read), not God (33). To the Apostle this scene, and likewise the company, must have been of singular interest. For the first time he had crossed the

threshold of a Gentile's habitation, and for the first time in the world's history were Gentiles gathered together to hear the Gospel of Divine grace. And if it was a strange thing to Peter, it was equally so to Cornelius, who fell down at the Apostle's feet and worshipped him. Great condescension he felt it was on the part of Peter to enter under his roof. The Apostle, however, raised him up, and set Cornelius at rest with the words, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." Then talking with him, they together entered the house.

The Address.—One thing was manifest, and that Peter gave expression to. "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him" (x. 34, 35). So Peter declared. With this beginning—a relief, probably, to his mind in the new circumstances in which he was placed—he proceeded to recount, but briefly, what they, it would seem, knew of the Lord's ministry in life, and of His death on the cross; and went on to that which might be new to some, that God had raised Him from the dead. Of the Lord he had spoken: He had gone about doing good and healing all that were possessed of the devil, for God was with Him. Of the Jews he also spoke: they had crucified Him. What a contrast—the One all goodness, the others manifesting in their treatment of Him the intense hatred of the natural heart to God and to His grace! Of God too he spoke: He had raised up Christ from the dead, thus espousing His cause whom men had put to death. Of all this—the life, the death, the resurrection—Peter and others were witnesses. And further, Peter came that day with a message entrusted to him and to all the Eleven, which concerned every one upon earth. The crucified One is the appointed Judge of quick and dead. All will have to do with Him in the future. A new chapter in history therefore opens up. Whilst the Lord Jesus was upon earth, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel had He alone been sent.

No message of peace did He before the cross send by His Apostles to Gentiles (Matt. x. 5, 6, xv. 24). He came *then* as the Messiah to Israel; but He is coming some day as the Judge of quick and dead.

Was there, then, to be no message to any beyond the elect nation? Who can face the thought of standing before the judgment seat, if conscious in the slightest degree of having sinned, unless grace is known and the person is assured of it? Condemnation, and that final, is all that else could be looked for. Here, then, the message of forgiveness comes in most suitably, a welcome rift in the dark cloud which must otherwise envelop the sinner's future. A rift, shall we only say? Much more. The dark cloud rolls away never to come back. So Peter went on to declare that "unto Him"—the coming Judge—"give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). Few and simple were the words treating of grace and salvation. Much more, doubtless, Peter had intended to state (see xi. 15); but the work was done. God's provision for the sinner was no after-thought, though the time for its far-reaching application had only just come. It was the Divine purpose, the Divine wish, to grant forgiveness of sins to *every one* who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

To a company of utter strangers was that here declared. Strangers they were personally to Peter; but strangers also from the covenants of promise (Eph. ii. 12), they heard the glad tidings, and at once drank them in. Never before, and never since, have we heard of the whole company attending a preaching of grace brought into liberty of soul by crediting the Gospel of salvation. But it was so here, and public attestation was vouchsafed through the Holy Ghost falling on every one, as evidenced by their speaking with tongues and magnifying God (Acts x. 44-46); and witnesses sufficient in number, and by no means prejudiced in favour of Gentiles, were there to accredit the fact, that

"on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Let us mark the terms here used to express it. The Holy Ghost *fell* on them (44). He was *poured out* on them (45). They *received* the Holy Ghost (47). It was the *gift* of the Spirit (xi. 17). It was a *baptism* of the Spirit (xi. 16). In nothing did these Gentiles come short of that which had been bestowed at Pentecost. And now for the second and the last time in the Christian dispensation was the Spirit *poured out*; and for the second and the last time do we read of a *baptism* of the Spirit taking place. People often loosely talk of such an event as taking place, or to be desired, in our day. But that never has occurred again, nor have we the slightest intimation that it ever will. A fresh pouring-out the prophets distinctly predict (Isa. xxxii. 15, xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxix. 29; Joel ii. 28). A baptism of the Spirit was a truth outside the range of their vision. Are we then worse off than the early Christians as to the gift of the Spirit and its consequence? No; for though miraculous powers may be withheld, all other blessings connected with it can be still enjoyed. Each one, as he receives the Gospel of his salvation, comes into the effect of the baptism of the Spirit, becoming thereby a member of the Body of Christ. Paul, as we saw, was not converted at Pentecost nor present at Cæsarea; yet he shared in this baptism. So then do all believers now (1 Cor. xii. 13), and should own it and the consequences flowing from it.

Cornelius, then, and his company received the gift of the Holy Ghost direct from on high, without the laying on of apostolic hands, as had recently taken place in Samaria. From this time the Body of Christ was fully formed, composed of believers from Gentiles as well as from Jews. And this Body exists still on earth.

Christian Baptism.—Baptised with the Spirit, an act which embraced the whole company, and which is never

spoken of with reference to individuals; each individual had to be baptised with water as well. The former could not supplant or render needless the latter: profession of discipleship to Christ who had died had to be made. Each one had to be buried with Christ in order to be reckoned outwardly on Christian ground. Perfectly distinct, as we see here, are these two baptisms. Christian baptism with water communicates no spiritual blessing to the one who submits to it. It does not give life, nor is it a figure of it; for we are buried by it unto death, which is a very different thing (Rom. vi. 3, 4). Moreover, in confirmation of what we have said, every spiritual blessing belonged to Cornelius and to his company before they submitted to Christian baptism. Spiritual life, forgiveness of sins, salvation, justification, the being in Christ, and the being members of the Body of Christ, all these blessings were theirs already who had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gift necessarily brings the recipient into the fullest Christian blessing. Still baptism by water, the being baptised unto Christ, was requisite, for in this way only could they take their places as His disciples and be professedly in His company,—buried with Him thereby. So at Peter's command to that rite they submitted. Gentiles had become members of the Body of Christ, and formed part of the Church of God, and each and all of them in that house took also openly their places as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Receiving the Holy Ghost.—The gift of the Spirit they shared in. Now, the bestowal of that Christian blessing on this occasion sheds light for us on that which is ordinarily required to receive it. We say ordinarily, because here apostolic hands were not laid on them, as on those in Samaria (Acts viii.), and subsequently on some believers at Ephesus (xix. 6). Peter had just spoken of the forgiveness of sins by faith in Christ. Each member of the company that he addressed believed that, and they each and all at once received the Holy Ghost. They had

oelieved that which Paul, writing to the Ephesians, calls "the Gospel of salvation" (Eph. i. 13). What that Gospel is Peter in this address at Cæsarea makes clear to us. Forgiveness of sins was preached—that was all. Then, taking the Apostle at once, and simply at his word, God without one minute's delay gave to them the Holy Ghost; their speaking with tongues, as we have said, being the outward manifestation of it. Now, this was and is the normal way of receiving that blessing. The Galatians thus received the Spirit (Gal. iii. 2), the Ephesian saints likewise (Eph. i. 13). And Peter in the Acts (v. 32) has already taught us that saints in general thus came to share in it. We know, then, what line of truth is needed to bring souls into that liberty, which is enjoyed when they are partakers of the gift of the Spirit. It is the preaching of plenary forgiveness by faith in Christ Jesus.

Salvation.—Further, that Gospel received ensures salvation. What does this mean? As saved a person is delivered from something which had threatened him. A saved man is a delivered man. That Israel learnt, and rejoiced in, when standing that eventful morning on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. On the previous day they seemed in a terrible strait. The sea was before them. The army of Pharaoh, with his chariots and horses, was coming up behind them. To turn to the right or to the left was impossible, for they "were entangled in the land, the wilderness had shut them in." So said Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 3). To go forward was to court death by drowning. To remain where they were was, humanly speaking, to await certain destruction at the hands of the Egyptian cavalry and chariots. In this predicament came that word by Moses to the affrighted people, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." They did see that; for going forward to the sea, and passing through its bed as on dry land, the waters which they thought must surely engulf them were forced by Almighty power to be a wall on their right hand and on

their left. No flank movement of the enemy was therefore possible: to follow behind the Israelites was the only course. Then Israel saw their enemies dead on the sea-shore, overwhelmed by the returning waves. They were saved. Neither had the sea engulfed them, nor had their enemies destroyed them. They were delivered, so could sing, "The Lord [or, Jah] is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Exod. xv. 2).

Now, for us there is soul salvation, as Cornelius and his company that day learnt. Life the centurion had already possessed—eternal life really. But salvation he had never known. Deliverance from the just consequences of his sins he had not previously enjoyed. So we see in him illustrated the salvation of the soul, of which Peter writes (1 Peter i. 9), before receiving full salvation of the person, which will come at a future day (1 Peter i. 5). Soul salvation, then, apart from final deliverance in the last time, is New Testament doctrine, and in its fulness and freeness is Christian doctrine. Prophets of old, we are taught by the same Apostle, learnt that they ministered really to coming generations, writing of that which was not in their own day to be enjoyed. At Pentecost the time had come for the salvation of the soul to be known by the believer. We say at Pentecost, because during the Lord's life on earth that blessing, like forgiveness of sins, was not preached nor generally dispensed. A woman in the Pharisee's house learnt that her sins were forgiven (Luke vii. 48). To the house of the publican Zacchæus salvation came when the Lord entered under his roof (Luke xix. 9). But these were exceptional cases, like drops of rain the prelude to a great shower.

Now, however, consequent on the death and resurrection of the Lord, a great change was introduced: forgiveness of sins was to be preached, and by consequence soul salvation was to be enjoyed. So the Apostle Paul could write of this dispensation as "the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). Then,

addressing the company in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, he declared, "To you is the word of this salvation sent" (Acts xiii. 26). And when the Jews at Rome refused the truth, he told them, "This salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it" (xxviii. 28). It was *present* salvation; so he could say to Timothy, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling" (2 Tim. i. 9). To the Ephesians he could write, "By grace are ye saved through faith," for they had received the Gospel of their salvation (Eph. ii. 8). Deliverance from the consequences of their sins they enjoyed, and knew it. So was it with Cornelius when he had heard the words whereby he could be saved. So is it with every one who rests on the Divine testimony of forgiveness of sins through the precious blood of Christ. To have spiritual life is one thing, to be saved is another. Not that God will stop short of perfecting His work in the soul; but He desires that the individual should believe the message of forgiveness and know that he is saved.

Every One.—We have spoken of Cornelius's history as illustrating the normal way of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. We have pointed out also that it explains to us how salvation comes to be enjoyed. Another point also comes out in bold relief—viz., the universal application of some statements which might otherwise have been confined to the elect nation. The Gospel of John has made us familiar with expressions in the course of the Lord's teaching such as "whosoever," "every one," "he that," etc. (John iii. 15, 16; v. 24; vi. 40, 45, 51; viii. 12; x. 9). Were these only to be applied to individuals of the family of Jacob, or have they for their legitimate scope the widest application on earth, being limited only by the bounds of the human race? As long as the Lord was on earth the disciples were confined in their ministry to the house of Israel. Now, however, by the call of Gentiles, as seen in the history of Cornelius and his company, we learn that the

offer of the Gospel, and the blessings attendant on its reception, can be shared in by any one of the human race to whom the message comes. "Whosoever" means *whosoever*. "Every man," "he that," etc., are to be taken in their widest application; the Lord Jesus, we now understand, using language which foretold how far-reaching were the thoughts of God and His purposes of grace. "*Whosoever* [or, every one that] believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins," so Peter had said. At Cæsarea these Gentiles took up the words in their fulness, and it became manifest that the grace of salvation could be of world-wide application. So for the first time such terms as we have referred to came to be interpreted without restriction of nationality. Looking back on Peter's address at Pentecost (Acts ii. 39), we see he used language of the fulness of the meaning of which he had then no idea. Now it was made abundantly clear that the "far off," of whom he had spoken at Jerusalem, were illustrated by the company which he had addressed in Cæsarea that day.

Peter's Defence.—And now, taught by the vision that he had on the housetop at Joppa to call no man common or, simply because of his nationality, unclean, Peter for the first time in his life abode with those who had been Gentiles, and that for some days. The middle wall of partition was for him broken down. As yet, however, and for several years to come, there were those at Jerusalem of the Christian community who knew not the liberty inaugurated by Christianity. Returning to Jerusalem, accompanied by six disciples from Joppa who had gone with him to Cæsarea, Peter was challenged as to the rightness of his conduct at the latter place. For tidings of that which had taken place at Cæsarea had reached the ears of the Apostles and brethren at Jerusalem. "They that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest unto men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them" (xi. 2, 3). He had not maintained that social separation which all of them

had hitherto, and rightly, upheld. But the question was raised in no hostile spirit, so conviction on the part of the questioners as to the rightness of his course was not difficult to be produced. Rehearsing the matter in order, to *four* points their attention was directed—proofs that it was all God's doing and not man's. *First*, Peter going up to the housetop to pray fell into a trance, and had a vision. God spoke to him, and he spoke to the Lord. *Second*, The Spirit, when that vision was ended, and all had been finally drawn up into heaven, bade him go with the messengers who were inquiring for him, nothing doubting, for He had sent them. *Third*, To Cornelius an angel had been sent telling him to send for Peter, from whom he would hear words by which he and all his house should be saved. *Fourth*, As Peter was addressing the company under the roof of Cornelius the Holy Ghost fell on them all, and Peter recognised it as a baptism of the Spirit.

With the effect on himself and on those brethren who accompanied him to Cæsarea his hearers were then made acquainted. Impossible, he felt, it was to withstand God. That was enough. Objectors were silenced because convinced; and glorifying God took the place of contending with Peter. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (xi. 18) indicated how fully they were satisfied. A distinct epoch in the Church's history was now to be marked. From henceforth Gentiles were to be evangelised in common with the race of Israel; for, as the Lord had told the gathered company in the upper room on the day of His resurrection, repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among *all the nations*, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47). The kingdom of heaven opened now to Gentiles, the work on earth could spread far and wide. To the way that work began to progress we are to be introduced by the historian.

Variations.—Ere, however, turning from this history of Cornelius, which is of lasting interest, we would remark on

the different accounts that we have of the two visions—that to Cornelius and that to Peter. Of the former we have substantially *three* accounts; of the latter there are *two*. Of course, when the historian wrote this book, the facts of the two visions must have been well and probably widely known as contemporary history. Mistakes, then, if there were any, might have been readily checked. No one, however, has done that. So we may safely conclude that the facts stated, allowing for the corrections arising from textual criticism, are veritable facts.

Now as to the first vision. The historian represents Cornelius as affrighted when he first saw the angel (Acts x. 4). Cornelius, in recounting what happened, wholly omits that which we should naturally have expected him to notice. Nor does he tell Peter of his salutation to the angel—"What is it, Lord?" though he did describe the appearance of the heavenly messenger as a man in bright apparel. This last point Luke has passed over. Another thing which the historian has not noticed Cornelius supplies. We learn that he was in prayer * when the angel appeared. Further, the centurion has preserved for us more particularly the actual words of the angel—"Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (x. 31). Now, the mention of his occupation at that moment gives more point to the angel's announcement that his prayer was heard. Turning to Peter's reference to this vision when at Jerusalem, he supplies what neither Luke nor Cornelius have stated—viz., the purpose to be effected by his visit to Cæsarea—"who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (xi. 14). For the reader should be reminded that both the last clause of ver. 6, "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do," as well as the last clause of ver. 32, "who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee," should be omitted.

Of the two accounts of Peter's vision, one is by Luke,

* "Fasting" (x. 30) should be omitted.

the other by himself, which he gave to the Christians at Jerusalem. Luke tells us that Peter was hungry at the time. This explains the point of the command, "Kill and eat." Peter, however, though telling his hearers of the command, omits all notice of his hunger. Naturally he might have mentioned what he felt at the time, just as Cornelius might have told of his feelings when he saw the angel. Both have left them to be stated by the historian. Again, the words of the Spirit announcing the coming of the centurion's messengers are only found in the history as narrated by Luke.

Now, these variations are very marked. How shall we account for them? Would any seek to explain them on a double-document hypothesis, or, as to Cornelius, on a triple-document hypothesis, and suppose some anonymous compiler blended the two or the three records into one? Would that stand as sound criticism? It would not. That Luke wrote the Acts is, we believe, unquestionable. That he was cotemporary with the centurion and with Peter no one can dispute. That he may have had the story of each from his own mouth no one can relegate to the region of impossibilities. We see, then, how varied may be different accounts of the same event, without any need to call in question the genuineness of the record or the authenticity of the narrative. If that be so in these cases, why may it not be equally so in others?

IX.

THE GOSPEL AT ANTIOCH, AND PETER'S DELIVERANCE AT JERUSALEM.

ACTS XI. 19—XII. 25.

THE door of the kingdom opened to Gentiles at Cæsarea, we are now to learn how the work began to spread among them. And here we mark, as in all the progress of the Gospel in the Acts, the guiding hand of God apart from apostolic direction or the superintendence of any committee of Christians. Consequent on the persecutions which arose about Stephen, Philip, as we have already seen, went down to Samaria, and found ready access to hearts, and could speak in consequence of a reaping time indeed among the Samaritans. Subsequently directed by the Spirit, he left that field of work to evangelise the eunuch in the desert, who carried home for his own joy, and doubtless for that of others, the good news of God's grace through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, as we have also seen, Peter distinctly commanded by the Holy Ghost, went to Cæsarea, and there opened the kingdom of the heavens to Gentiles. In the initiation of these different stages of the work apostolic guidance had no part. The Apostles heard of the work in Samaria after it had greatly progressed. They heard too of Peter's visit to Cornelius after that centurion had received the Holy Ghost. And now, as we shall see, they hear of the work among Gentiles at Antioch only after a great number of Greeks have believed and turned to the Lord. It was the same through-

out. The missionary journey to the heathen of the Apostles Barnabas and Paul was undertaken by distinct revelation from the Holy Ghost (Acts xiii. 2). And the extension of the work into Europe was brought about through a vision vouchsafed to Paul at Troas (xvi. 9). The Holy Ghost guided, and opened up new fields of labour.

Varied Agencies.—And now another thing may be noted. God has various agencies for the carrying on of His work. We have read of some already, as Peter, John, Stephen, and Philip. But many, whose names have found no place in the records of men, were used of God to spread abroad the truth. Already has Luke told us of disciples being scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria after Stephen's death. Stephen's voice could be hushed in death: his testimony, powerful and faithful as it was, had been suddenly terminated by his judicial murder—for murder it was, though professedly carried out in accordance with the Mosaic Law. But the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. So not only did the scattered ones betake themselves to Judæa and Samaria, but some travelled north and west, as far as Phœnice, Cyprus, and Antioch. To reach Cyprus, however, they must of course have taken ship. Yet from what port they embarked—whether from Cæsarea, Tyre, or Seleucia, or elsewhere—is a fact now buried in oblivion, as well as the name of the vessel which first bore on the bosom of the Great Sea an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. The voyage of the *May Flower* with the Pilgrim Fathers to their new home in the West will never be forgotten whilst the republic of the United States continues to exist. The voyage of many a missionary in modern times has not passed unnoticed. In this case it was otherwise, though never before, since the days of the Ark, had any vessel carried, on an open sea, so precious a freight as a messenger of the Prince of peace. What an object of interest that ship must have been to the whole angelic host! But who sent those workers in the

Gospel? Or who directed the steps of the first Christian visitors to Antioch in Syria? We can readily answer these questions. It was God the Holy Ghost, who is the director of the mission work upon earth.

Hellenists.—Of Phœnicia and of Cyprus we shall hear again (xiii., xxi.). Interest now is concentrated on Antioch. To native-born Jews had the Gospel been first entrusted. Hellenists, or Grecians, came subsequently to the front, as Stephen, Paul, and Barnabas. And now of Hellenists we are to read, men of Cyprus and of Cyrene, who, having reached Antioch, did not confine their labours to Jews and proselytes, but began to speak of the grace of God to *Greeks*, not Grecians, as we should read in Acts xi. 20. That these labourers had heard of Peter's visit to Cornelius is possible, though not very probable; and certainly that was no necessary prelude to their work in the ancient capital of the Seleucidæ. For since the Holy Ghost was really dwelling and directing on earth, He could guide those earnest men at Antioch to work amongst the Greeks subsequent to the reception of Cornelius, without previous intercourse between those towns about it. Such was probably the case. Those simple and true-hearted men, divinely led, could not restrain themselves. Greeks must hear the message of that salvation in which they rejoiced. And speaking Greek, as they probably did, there was no linguistic barrier to their intercourse with Greeks. They *spoke*, writes the historian, thus conveying the impression that it was familiar intercourse, and not set preaching, by which they worked. And their hearts being full of the Gospel message, they announced the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. Like a match set to a pile of brushwood, ready to blaze at once, the words of these pioneers in the work were evidently received with avidity. "The hand of the Lord," we read, "was with them, and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (xi. 21).

The Word.—Connected with this most interesting

movement, it should be remarked that we have no mention of miraculous agency being employed. Hitherto we have seen, in the work among the Jews and in Samaria, that miraculous powers have had a prominent, and at times the first place (ii. 4, iii. 6-10, v. 12, vi. 8, viii. 6). Among the Gentiles they had generally a subordinate place, at times even being absent. The Word of God in this latter service came to the front. Its power and suitability were thus attested, and the work, it was seen, could progress without miraculous agency being summoned to its aid. It was so at Antioch in Syria, and at Antioch in Pisidia. It was the same, as far as we know, at Thessalonica, and at Athens. This for our day is an important fact, as miracles have long ceased. But the Word abides, and the Holy Ghost is here. So that which powerfully wrought on Greeks at Antioch, and on Cornelius and his company at Cæsarea, can work still. The Holy Ghost, we would repeat, and emphasize it, is still here. The power, therefore, is present, if we are in a condition fitted to make use of it.

Antioch.—A few words about Antioch, now *Antaki*, founded B.C. 300 by Seleucus Nicator, and called after his father Antiochus. It was at this time under a Roman governor, who held his court in the ancient palace of the Seleucidæ, and was reckoned the third city in the Empire, Alexandria being the second. Near by was "one of the most lovely spots on the face of the earth—the celebrated Daphne, where was the Temple of Apollo and Diana, embosomed in a grove of myrtles and cypresses, ten miles in circumference. The Antiochians every year made a triumphant procession thither, with all the pomp and pageantry of a garish superstition." * Into this city, inhabited by no small number of Jews, for their synagogues were numerous, and amid a dense population, Christianity got a footing, and quickly gained a considerable number of adherents. Simple, earnest men spoke, and Greeks listened. They spoke of the truth

* Lewin's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 93.

they had received, announcing the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. Neither the inveterate opponents of Christianity—the Jews—nor idolaters interested in upholding the worship of Apollo and Diana, then appeared to hinder the work, which evidently spread most rapidly, till, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost, this city became the centre, the metropolis, as it were, of Christian missions to the heathen For from it the Apostle Paul went forth on each of his three missionary journeys (xiii. 1-4, xv. 35-41, xviii. 22, 23), and returned to it at the close of the two first (xiv. 26, xviii. 22), and doubtless would have conformed to his custom at the close of the third had not his free movement been arrested by imprisonment at Jerusalem.

Two remarks may here be made. 1st. Considering the population of the place, the number of Jews dwelling there, and the Temple of Apollo so close to it, surprise may be expressed that we never read in the Acts of any molestation of the Christians, either in the prosecution of their work of spreading the truth, or in the enjoyment of the exercise of their religion. Christianity flourished in the city, and its adherents continued to enjoy a freedom denied in apostolic days to many an one who dwelt elsewhere.

2nd. But where are now any abiding fruits of apostolic labours in Antioch? The place at which Paul and Barnabas preached in the city was professedly remembered, and pointed out down to the close of the sixth century. In Antioch, too, Chrysostom was born, and there for a time he preached, till called to the see of Constantinople. Further, the city was the seat of one of the four great patriarchates of the early Church. But now the Christians, we are told, have no Church within its walls, so low in Christian life and testimony has that once favoured city come.

Exhorting.—What interesting and eventful times were these of which we read! But the way God was working, and the surprises the Apostles surely had, must have called

forth many a thanksgiving and ascription of praise. Labourers had multiplied instead of being diminished. Saul had been added to that band, and the work burst forth at times, in places, and in ways little indeed expected. And now, after the result of Peter's visit to Cæsarea, there followed the extensive work in the city of Antioch. What next! some might have exclaimed. Hitherto to territory within the bounds of the Holy Land the spread of the truth had been almost confined. Samaria was part of Israel's territory. Antioch was outside of it, being situated beyond the entering in of Hamath, which was the northern boundary of the land of promise. When Samaria was evangelised, Peter and John went down at the request of the apostolic company, examined the work, and bestowed on the converts the Holy Ghost. On the present occasion, however, no Apostle left Jerusalem to examine and to report on the movement at Antioch. We do not up to this time read of any of the Twelve labouring outside the land of Canaan.

But who could be indifferent to the tidings which now reached Jerusalem? Not the Apostles, certainly; so they sent Barnabas as far as Antioch, to learn the real truth of the report that had come from that northern city. "A good man," we read, "and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (xi. 24), he seemed just the suited person. Besides, as we have already remarked, he was a Hellenist. Suited indeed he proved to be; for he found scope for his energies on his arrival, and his ministry was evidently much owned. It was not, however, that of a distinctively evangelistic character. Barnabas, as his surname really implies, was an exhorter (iv. 36). Early characterised by that line of ministry, and so surnamed because of it, we see him at Antioch labouring in that special way among the saints. "He *exhorted* them all," as he took notice of the grace of God, "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (xi. 23). His ministry proved both well timed

and prolific in results. "For much people was added unto the Lord" (24). Christ as Lord was confessed by the converts. What Peter had declared at Pentecost, disciples at Antioch acknowledged—viz., that God had made the crucified One both Lord and Christ. His Lordship they owned—a dignity peculiar to Himself; for there is but "one Lord—Jesus the Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Cor. viii. 6). Believers in Judæa were disciples of the Lord (Acts ix. 1). Much people at Antioch were added to the Lord. What Barnabas had witnessed at Jerusalem (v. 14) he could see going on through Christian ministry at Antioch. And in him we see exemplified a distinction in gift: evangelists had been at work in that city; an exhorter was now present. Evangelists worked amongst the unconverted; an exhorter found his chief sphere inside the assembly. Gifts of ministry are various. By degrees we see them in the Acts distinguished.

Tarsus.—Exhortation, however, is not enough to build up souls in the faith, helpful and needful as it is in its place. He who really exhorts is a prophet in the sense of 1 Cor. xiv. 3. Such an one brings the mind of God through the written Word to bear on souls. Believers, however, need teaching as well. Now, Barnabas evidently felt that this last was not his special line of service. Would he, then, keep the converts at Antioch under his influence, shut up to his ministry? No. Their advancement and establishment in the faith he desired. And knowing where to find one qualified to teach, he departed to Tarsus in Cilicia to seek Saul. Between Antioch and Tarsus there was a ready means of communication, the former city being on the highway from Asia Minor, through Tarsus to Phœnicia, Palestine, and Egypt. If Barnabas proceeded by land, he must have passed through Alexandretta, then called Alexandria, which was near the great highway from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Falling into that road a little south of Alexandria, and proceeding along it to Tarsus, he would have skirted the

shores of the *Issicus Sinus*, now called the *Gulf of Iskenderun*. Or, if so minded, he may have gone by water from the seaport of Antioch direct to that of Tarsus. Whichever method of travelling he adopted, whether the land journey or the sea voyage, he reached the goal to which he was bound, the metropolis of Cilicia.

A few words here about the city before proceeding with the narrative. Tarsus, now called *Tarsoos*, was a town boasting of several centuries of existence. It was said to have been founded by Sardanapalus, and was afterwards colonised by Argives. By Mark Antony after the battle of Philippi it was declared free, and by Augustus after the battle of Actium it was dignified with the title of *metropolis*. It had a famous school of philosophy, and ranked as one of the three great universities of the Pagan world, and from its philosophers the Imperial family in Rome selected tutors for their children.* Barnabas found Saul in his native city, to which he had retired after his first and short visit to Jerusalem (Acts ix. 30), subsequent to his conversion, and had no difficulty, it would seem, in inducing him to leave that place of learning, where doubtless he had in his youth been made acquainted with heathen literature,† to help on the work in the capital of Syria, on the Orontes.

Teaching.—And now a third kind of ministry was displayed in that city, as the historian tells us that with Saul present they *taught* much people. *Evangelising* had been commenced and carried on by men of Cyprus and Cyrene. *Exhortation* had found a place and produced much fruit after Barnabas had first reached Antioch. Now teaching was commenced, and great blessing resulted. "They

* Lewin's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 7.

† In Acts xvii. 28 St. Paul quotes from Aratus, a poet of Cilicia, who lived about 270 B.C. The same words are found in the writings of Cleanthes, of Assos in Mysia, who was born B.C. 300. In 1 Cor. xv. 33 the Apostle quotes Menander, an Athenian poet born B.C. 342. In Titus i. 12 he quotes from Epimenides, a Cretan poet who lived about 600 B.C.

taught," we read, "much people" (xi. 26). Thus these different gifts were displayed, each and all needful ere souls could be fully established in the faith, yet quite distinct in their character, though exercised at times, as might be the case, by the same person. At Antioch, however, it was otherwise. The first Christian visitors evangelised; then the eminent exhorter appeared; and lastly the time for teaching had arrived, when Saul reached it from Tarsus.

We do well to mark these differences. All labourers in the Word are not evangelists. All are not calculated to be exhorters. All certainly are not teachers. Each labourer will do well to learn what his special gift is, or gifts are, and to keep to them. In this way the work will make better progress, and be often deeper in souls, being carried on more in accordance with the Divine mind. Is there not a waking up in some measure among Christians to this, in the recognition of those called missioners in different ecclesiastical systems—a confession, so far, of the difference of gifts, and the need of leaving room for their exercise? Still, if we are to conform to the practice of apostolic times, more is needed in that direction, and nothing will be sufficient short of the recognition of the freedom of ministry, remembering that the gifts of Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers are from the ascended Christ (Eph. iv. 11-13) to men; and that no one was ever ordained to teach or to preach by the Apostles. Ordination there was for appointment to office in the assembly, but never for the exercise of ministry in the Word.*

* Would any reader think 2 Tim. ii. 2 militates against this? If he marks that the Apostle there dwells on what had been *heard* that Timothy was to hand on, it will be plain that it is the handing on of *teaching* of which the Apostle treats, and not of *ordination*. We can *hear* truth, but we cannot *hear* ordination. A man may *receive* the latter, as elders did. The Apostle's word *heard* explains what he means, and should be sufficient to guard the passage from misapplication.

Christians.—For a whole year teaching now went on without let or hindrance, as far as we are informed, and the disciples in this city first received a new appellation, being called Christians. *Nazorœans* the Jews had styled and continued to style them (Acts xxiv. 5). *Brethren*, they designated themselves. *Christians*, the men of Antioch surnamed them. "Nazorœans" told its tale of all that the Jews could say—viz., that the people whom they thoroughly detested were followers of one brought up at Nazareth. Of anything about the Lord beyond His life and death they knew nothing; His parents belonged to Nazareth, so they called Him a Nazorœan, and His followers were named *Nazorœans*. The disciples, however, had come to know of and to enjoy a fellowship together as children of the same Father: hence they called themselves *Brethren* (i. 15,* ix. 30, xii. 17). And now the men of Antioch, hearing those who had visited their city speak of the Christ, of whom doubtless those earnest labourers loved to discourse, surnamed all confessors of the Lord Jesus—Christians. But never in the New Testament do believers so term themselves: Acts xxvi. 28 and 1 Peter iv. 16, the only other places where the term occurs, show what others called them, and they knew it. Greeks at Antioch, then, thus first named them—a testimony to the truth which the converts proclaimed, and of Him of whom they evidently spoke. Christ was in their hearts. Christ was on their lips. Christians they were therefore surnamed. Happy times were these! Much people were now being taught by Barnabas and Saul. Evidently the work deepened and spread.

Agabus.—At this juncture another person appeared on the scene, of whom we shall hear again later on (Acts xxi. 10). He was a prophet, named Agabus—a prophet in the common acceptation of the term, *i.e.* one who foretells future events. At what precise moment he visited Antioch

* So the better reading.

is not stated. The historian leaves it undetermined. "In these days," he writes, leading us to conclude that whilst Saul and Barnabas were happily engaged in teaching Agabus and others appeared in the city. His service at this time was twofold. He foretold the famine which was to be severely felt by the Christians in Judæa. He also by that prediction furnished the opportunity for the saints at Antioch to show their sympathy for, and real oneness with, their brethren in Judæa. And this we learn they were not slow to do; for the movement among them was general, and, as far as we can see, spontaneous. The approaching famine foretold, relief was organised, and each one according to his ability determined to send it to the brethren who dwelt in Judæa, which we read they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

True Oneness.—Most interesting is this little trait of the converts at Antioch. We have seen how the disciples in very early days at Jerusalem had all things in common. But all of them were then of one nation, Jews. In this case it was different. It was Gentiles, as many of them had been, who now determined to minister to those who had been Jews. This marked a development in the practical understanding of Christian teaching. The middle wall of partition (Eph. ii. 14) was indeed broken down, and they were conscious of it, and showed it. A oneness now existed between the saints at Antioch and those in Jerusalem. Children they were of one Father. Each and all too shared in the gift of the Holy Ghost, so they were in Christ, and were members also of the Body of Christ. And this visit of Agabus and his prediction furnished them with an opportunity, of which they were most ready to avail themselves, of practically showing the new association into which through grace they had been brought. Contributions from Antioch for the support of the Temple were forwarded from time to time by the Archon, or chief ruler there among the Jews, to the High

Priest at Jerusalem; and such were furnished for the maintenance of the worship, in which with those at Jerusalem they had a common interest. This, of which we now read, was something very different. Those who had been Gentiles were now about to minister to those who had been Jews. A new, a welcome sight! Had those at Jerusalem made a collection for starving saints, converts from heathendom, we should have said it was a beautiful exhibition of love. It was, however, just the reverse. And it emphasized the fact how really those at Antioch recognised their oneness in the faith with the poor suffering ones in Judæa. A Greek would naturally have regarded a Jew with scorn. These Greeks, however, as they were naturally, viewed the Christians at Jerusalem with true brotherly interest, and manifested in this substantial way their real brotherly love. What joy it must have afforded Barnabas and Saul to carry up these tokens of it, the fruit of Christian ministry which had been in exercise in that city!

A Note of Time.—Here let us mark the first note of time given us in the Acts. The famine predicted by Agabus came to pass in the reign of Claudius. Profane history tells us that it took place in the fourth year of his reign, which was A.D. 44. Ascending the throne on the death of Caligula, Jan. 41, Judæa and neighbouring countries were visited by a severe famine in A.D. 44, which pressed heavily on those in the land, so much so that Helena, the queen dowager of Adiabene, then residing at Jerusalem, sent to Alexandria for corn, figs, etc., wherewith to mitigate the suffering. She ministered to the Jews. The Antiochian Christians ministered to the *saints* in Judæa.

Fixing thus the date of the famine, we know when Barnabas and Saul must have visited Jerusalem; so that all that we have hitherto read in the Acts, and probably the deeds of Herod the king narrated in the following chapter, took place not later than A.D. 44. If, then, we

accept the date of the Crucifixion as A.D. 30, there were just fourteen years between that event and the famine to which Luke now refers. How much had gone on of deep interest to every Christian! How many stirring events had taken place within the cognisance of the Apostles and early converts! But now the hitherto unbroken company of the Twelve, since the election of Matthias in the place of Judas, was to be attacked, and one from amongst them to die so early a martyr's death,—James the brother of John was to be killed by the sword by order of King Herod.

Herod Agrippa.—A change had recently taken place in the government of Judæa and Samaria. After the death of Herod the Great, who ruled over the whole land, his son Archelaus was appointed by the Emperor Augustus ruler over Judæa, Idumæa and Samaria, with the title of *Ethnarch*. To Herod Antipas, his brother, were assigned Galilee and Peræa with the title of *Tetrarch*. And to Philip, the other brother, was given the tetrarchy of Trachonitis, Auranitis, Batanæa, and part of what was called the house of Zenon, or Zenodorus. Herod Antipas fixed his capital at Tiberias. Philip had for his, Cæsarea Philippi.* Archelaus, after ruling about ten years, was deprived of his province for his severities, and a Roman governor under the Syrian Præfect administered its affairs. Herod Antipas was banished in A.D. 39. Philip died in his government A.D. 34. Under Claudius a fresh change took place; for Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, and grandson therefore of Herod the Great, who had previously received from the Emperor Caligula the tetrarchies of his two uncles, Antipas and Philip, received in addition, as soon as Claudius was settled on the Imperial throne, part of the territory formerly assigned to Archelaus—viz., the provinces of Judæa and Samaria, with the title of king. Thus for a brief space a king again reigned in Judæa in the person of Herod Agrippa,

* Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., pp. 16, 17, 102-104.

who lived chiefly at Jerusalem. A strict observer of the law, but receiving his kingdom from the Emperor, he doubtless sought to win favour with the Jews by laying hands on Apostles to put them to death. It was evidently a political, and, as the king thought, a politic, move on his part.

Hitherto all attempts to stop the movement in Jerusalem have proceeded from the ecclesiastical authorities. But since the persecution which arose about Stephen subsided, the Sanhedrin seems to have let the matter alone. Now the civil power wielded by Agrippa entered the lists, and began to conduct a crusade against the followers of the Lord Jesus. Would it be successful where the others had failed? At first it seemed to triumph; for James the brother of John was executed, and no sign from heaven attested its abhorrence of the deed. The company of the Apostles Herod Agrippa had now diminished by one. The Christians could not by human means successfully enter into conflict with the king. The sword of the executioner had taken the life of James. Was the charm which seemed for so long to have surrounded the Apostles now broken? Could Peter be got rid of in a similar way? What a triumph would that afford Agrippa! What pleasure would it give the Jews! Peter, therefore, was apprehended, and apparently without difficulty, and kept in custody till the Paschal feast should be over. And, very probably, Agrippa, aware of the marvellous deliverance of the Apostles when the whole company had been incarcerated, pending their appearance before the ecclesiastical authorities, sought to guard against any surprise of that kind by consigning his prisoner to the custody of four quaternions of soldiers, charged to have always two soldiers present, to whom Peter was to be chained. Movement, therefore, without the cognisance of his guards was impossible. Escape seemed hopeless. No popular stir in his favour could be looked for. No indignation meetings could be held. The weak,

powerless Christians, what could they do? So Agrippa may have thought. But there was another question to be solved: What would God do?

Peter's Deliverance.—Day after day had passed, the feast was nearly over, but Peter was still a prisoner, chained to the soldiers. A few hours more, and he would be brought forth to the people, and his execution would follow. How near seemed the success of Agrippa's plans! The monarch could retire to rest with no thought about his prisoner, save that he had him securely within his grasp, so that escape was impossible. But two essential elements in the situation the king had left out of his calculations. The one was the power of God, the other the power of prayer. "Prayer was made" for Peter, we read, "without ceasing [or, earnestly] of the Church" (xii. 5). The king might be sleeping. The Christians were praying. Which would prevail—the power of man, or the prayer of faith?

Peter's last night apparently had come. What was he doing? Was he restless, anxiously thinking of the morrow? He was quietly sleeping between two soldiers, having left, we may be sure, his case in the hands of the Lord. And now He, who never slumbers nor sleeps, began to work, during the silent hours of night. For God to work at such a time was nothing new. Of old, at night He smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. At night, too, the Lord was born. Ere the light of day gilded the mountain tops the Lord came forth from the tomb in resurrection might. At night, too, it was that the train of events began to be unfolded which issued in Joseph's deliverance from the dungeon. At night, too, that turn of events began which culminated in the downfall of Haman and the deliverance of the Jews in the kingdom of Ahasuerus from the slaughter which had threatened them. Fruitful indeed had been the hours of night in events of the greatest importance. Again was that proved, when Peter was aroused from sleep by an angel. A light shone in the

prison. A ministering angel stood by him. He spoke to him and told him what to do. Rising up in obedience to the word of command, his fetters fell off. His movements were free. The guards continued sleeping, whilst he put on his sandals and his garment. Past both the first and second ward, or guard, without challenge, Peter and the angel then went out through the great iron gate, which swung back on its hinges of its own accord to let them pass. All was quiet within the prison, all still as death. Slumber—very likely supernatural slumber, of which at times we read (Gen. ii. 21, xv. 12; 1 Sam. xxvi. 12)—had fallen on the guards, from which neither the movements of their prisoner nor the light which had shined around aroused them. Wholly unconscious of the miraculous interposition, the guards slept on.

Mary's House.—Peter had followed his guide almost in a dreamy state, for he "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision" (Acts xii. 9). When, however, he was clear of the prison, having passed down one street, the angel left him. His mission was ended. And the Apostle, now come to himself, and conscious of his freedom, could say, "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (11). Then bending his steps to Mary's house, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together praying, he knocked at the door to announce in person the answer to their prayers.

But who could be disturbing them at that hour of the night? A damsel named Rhoda went to learn. The sound of the voice she well knew: Peter was at the gate. Joy filled her heart. She ran back to announce the welcome but unexpected intelligence. Impossible to be true, the company thought, forgetful that it is a real thing to pray, and for God to answer prayer. Peter's continued knocking, and the damsel's asseverations, made it impossible for the

company to refuse to investigate the matter. So the door was opened, and Peter certainly stood before them, delivered from prison and from his impending doom. Explanations on his part quickly followed, and with an injunction to tell James and the brethren, he departed and went to another place. Short was the interview, but most satisfactory. Their prayer had been answered: Peter was free. After this, save his appearance at the council in chap. xv., and the account of the part he took in it, his very name drops out of the history of the Acts. His special service in connection with the Gospel had been carried out. He had opened the kingdom of the heavens to both Jews (ii.) and Gentiles (x.); and although he laboured, and travelled in service after that (1 Cor. ix. 5; Gal. ii. 11; 1 Peter v. 13), he finds no further place in the pages of the Church's first historian, who will now devote himself for a time to tracing out the extension of the work among the Gentiles.

The Prison, and the Court.—Day dawned, light streamed into the prison; but where was the prisoner? The guards woke up to find that Peter was not there, though the chains, which had bound him to them, were still fastened to his two custodians. They might call to the other guards, but none of them had seen Peter escaping, though he had passed by them. None had connived at his disappearance. Where was he? Would they examine the great iron gate? That was firmly fastened; no one had tampered with it. No trace of the prisoner, however, could they find. No explanation but one of his escape could be really entertained. Supernatural power must have been in exercise, for of haste in his departing there was no evidence. His sandals, his girdle, his upper garment, all had disappeared. But again they might ask, Where was he? There was no small stir among the soldiers. The prisoner, however, they found not.

The king was informed of his mysterious disappearance. He sought for his prisoner, and surely he had all the

Jewish authorities, with many of the population probably, on his side. But all in vain: he could not be found. The Lord evidently sheltered him. The guards therefore must die, technically guilty of remissness, though really innocent of any crime worthy of death or of bonds. Herod, thus defeated, left Jerusalem for Cæsarea.

Herod's End.—Where Peter went has not been disclosed. Herod's end, however, both sacred and profane history have put on record. He died in great suffering of a loathsome disease, smitten by an angel after receiving the adulation of a crowd that his voice was that of a god and not of a man. Angelic agency had delivered Peter. Angelic agency rid the world of this new persecutor of the Church. He was eaten up of worms. Short-lived had been his triumph over the Christians. Short-lived had been his greatness as a ruler. He could boast of an extent of territory which no one of his family since his grandfather had enjoyed. He could rejoice in the favour of the Emperor Claudius. Of wealth, too, he had abundance, yet he died miserably poor if he died without Christ. Imperial favour and friendship, and kingly power on earth, what are they worth, if worms attack the body, and the individual passes away unsaved?

The last persecution at Jerusalem had ended. With what result? "The Word of God grew and multiplied" (xii. 24). So had it ever been. After the detention of Peter and John, and their release, we read: "With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" (iv. 33). The whole apostolic company were next arrested and threatened; but "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (vi. 7). Stephen was martyred, and the disciples thereby "scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word" (viii. 4). Threats, imprisonments, martyrdoms, did not arrest the

movement. And certainly Herod's awful end would not embolden any further attempts against the Apostles. Persecution at Jerusalem then, as far as we know, ceased; and Barnabas and Saul could return unmolested to Antioch, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark. The ministry of love on the part of the Christians at Antioch to the poor saints at Jerusalem was discharged. Now we are to read of fresh conquests of the Gospel, and that in new countries, and amongst both barbarians and educated heathen.

Guidance.—We may here pause for a moment to survey the work. Samaria evangelised, Gentiles admitted into the kingdom, Greeks converted at Antioch: such is the record in brief, besides the work in Judæa and in Jerusalem, and all carried out without apostolic direction or human authority. The Holy Ghost opened out, as we have said, fields of labour independently of human direction. What He did then we may count on Him to do still. It is wise to let Him work as He will, and then, like the Apostles, gladly to acknowledge what He has done. The exercise of ministry in the Word never was subject to apostolic direction in early days. Should it be subordinated to men, however godly and earnest, now? We ask the question. The reader can surely answer it.

Peter's Ministry.—We have said that Peter now vanishes from the pages of the Acts, saving his appearance at the council in Jerusalem (xv.). A few words, then, on his ministry may not be out of place. In certain things in his preaching he stands out alone. At Pentecost by his word three thousand were converted. At Cæsarea the whole company addressed received blessing. He preached, too, in the Temple court, and proclaimed, one may suppose, in sight of the brazen altar plenary forgiveness, and that apart from Jewish rites, and the blood of bulls and of goats. Then, like Paul, he could open up the prophetic word (Psalms xvi., cx., cxviii.; Deut. xviii.), and point out that

the Lord Jesus was the real subject of it. Addressing Jews, he quotes in full Old Testament Scriptures. Addressing Gentiles, he only refers to them. A fitness in this we can all see. He knew his audience, and ministered accordingly. Then as to miracles. He healed the sick, and raised the dead. In this, too, Paul can be compared with him; whilst both he at Jerusalem, and Paul at Ephesus, must have appeared as men to be wondered at. By his shadow sick ones were cured. From Paul's body healing virtue by napkins was conveyed. Yet all this did not shelter either the one or the other from imprisonment, nor finally, in each case, from a martyr's death.

X.

ST. PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. DIVINE COMMAND.

ACTS XIII. 1-43.

"YE shall be My witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). These were the last recorded words of the Lord ere He commenced His ascent to heaven. Of the commencement of their fulfilment the historian will now treat.

Barnabas and Saul had returned to Antioch. The Church in that city flourished. Ministers were not lacking, nor are their names withheld. Saul, last named in the list, will however now soon come to the front.

Prophets.– Of different gifts we have already spoken (p. 168). Here the historian draws a distinction, we presume, between a *prophet* and a *teacher*, as he mentions both, perhaps regarding Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius more in the light of prophets, and Manaen and Saul more as teachers. Both gifts are greatly to be valued. A prophet of course is one who has the mind of God, and can communicate it, whether foretelling the future or not. So Abraham is the first person called in the Old Testament a prophet, though he never, that we read of, predicted any event (Gen. xx. 7). In the New Testament two prophetic ministries are mentioned and distinguished (1 Cor. xiv.). In the one we have a vessel of revelation, of which Agabus is an illustration. In the other we have a minister, who

brings to bear on the heart and conscience of the hearer the mind of God. Such an one ministers the truth of God, but without revealing anything new. The effect of this latter kind of ministry 1 Corinthians teaches us. As regards *unbelievers*, or unlearned people, strangers to the assembly, "If all prophesy," one such coming in "is convinced of all, he is judged of all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). The result of such a prophetic ministry in *saints* is to be, "that all may learn, and all may be comforted [or, encouraged]" (31). But should there be a prophet present, to whom some fresh revelation was communicated, if another was ministering he was to be at once silent, that the vessel of revelation might give forth that which he had received (30); for God the Holy Ghost never reveals anything out of season.

Now both these kinds of prophesying were displayed at Antioch, besides the exercise in ministry of teaching, which is not necessarily prophesying. For instance, opening out Church truth, or setting forth dispensational instruction, would be teaching, yet not that character of service defined in 1 Cor. xiv. 3 as prophesying. We have said both these kinds of prophesying were displayed, for we learn there was a revelation vouchsafed, when the disciples were gathered together, concerning Barnabas and Saul.

Antioch was then rich in ministerial gifts. Of the five mentioned by name, two of them, if not three, are not noticed elsewhere. Barnabas heads the list, followed by Simeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene. Of Simeon we know nothing more, nor of Lucius of Cyrene, unless he be the same as Paul's kinsman mentioned in Rom. xvi. 21, which is not very probable. Some have identified him with Luke, which seems clearly to be a mistake. Manaen too is introduced in no other place in the New Testament. Here we learn that he was foster-brother of Herod the

Tetrarch, and son, or perhaps grandson, of a certain Manaen, an Essene, who was highly respected by Herod the Great. How different the path of the brothers! Herod had been ruling for years in his Tetrarchy, but had recently been banished to Lugdunum, the modern Lyons,* in Gaul. The other through grace became an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, called to reign with Him before whose judgment-seat Herod Antipas must one day stand to receive his doom as the murderer of John the Baptist. To turn to the revelation now vouchsafed.

The Revelation.—Often have we met in the Old Testament with fresh revelations introduced by "Thus saith the Lord." Now it was very different. The same Divine Person was speaking—the Spirit of God—but He spoke from Himself. "Separate Me † Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "Separate Me," "I have called them." Sovereign action these words attest. Already have we been made acquainted in this book with the personal presence and action of the Spirit (v. 3, 9, 32; viii. 29; x. 19; xi. 12); but no more marked announcement of His sovereign guidance could there be, than this revelation vouchsafed when they were ministering to the Lord and fasting. Obedient to the Divine communication, they prepared to carry it out. For when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (or perhaps better, comp. iv. 21, v. 40, xvii. 9, they let them go). But they went on their mission, Luke adds, "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." Their call to this new work and their apostolic mission they derived from the Holy Ghost. Let go to their work by the

* It is questioned whether it was Lyons, or another town, Lugdunum Convenarium, now called *St. Bertrand de Comminges*, situated at the foot of the Pyrenees (Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i., 2nd ed., p. 1347).

† Some would translate "Separate Me now," which gives precision and force to the command, implying that it was for a special purpose and to be obeyed at the time (Alford).

disciples, they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. The terms used here in the inspired record are worthy of notice, and would confirm the translation "let go" rather than "sent away" in ver. 3.

Laying on of Hands.—A very solemn occasion all acknowledged it to be. Prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands marked it. "They laid their hands on them," we read. Was that ordination, as has often been assumed? To what did they ordain them? Not to minister in the Word. Both had for years been doing that with much profit to their hearers, and with marked approval on the part of God. Was it ordination to Apostleship? How could these, not themselves of apostolic rank, ordain any for the Apostolate? Besides, Saul received his call for that office directly from the Lord, and on the day of his conversion. See the words of the Lord to him, quoted in Acts xxvi. 17, "To whom I send thee," confirmed by the Divine communication to him in the Temple at Jerusalem (xxii. 21). Did the Apostle Paul consider the laying on of the hands of others ordination to his special office? Surely we may believe he did not. Else why, when vindicating his claim to be an Apostle, did he not refer to this time and this act (1 Cor. ix. 1; 2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 12)? What then are we to understand by the laying on of hands on this occasion?

In Old Testament times we meet with this act (Heb. vi. 2), both in connection with sacrificial victims and with people. On animals brought to the altar the offerer laid his hand: in the case of the burnt-offering or peace-offering, in token of being identified with the value of the sacrifice; in the case of the sin-offering, as an acknowledgment that it stood in his place, his guilt being transferred to it. Then on persons hands were laid in recognition of the part or lot appointed them. We see that on the occasion of the setting apart of the Levites for their service. The elders, by God's appointment, laid their hands on them,

the acknowledgment that they were selected to serve Him instead of the first-born of the twelve tribes, on whom He had a claim (Numb. viii. 10). Again, when the blasphemer (Lev. xxiv. 14) was to be put to death, the witnesses laid their hands on his head. They had fellowship in the execution of the sentence. Further, when Joshua was to be recognised as the leader of the people, subsequent to the death of Moses, the latter laid his hands on him (Numb. xxvii. 18); and on that occasion a gift was thereby conferred (Deut. xxxiv. 9), for it was a superior laying his hands on one not equal to him in spiritual rank.

Coming to the New Testament, we meet with the same practice, but confined to persons; for the one perfect Sacrifice had been already offered up, and accepted. On persons hands were laid by Apostles, as by Peter and John in Samaria (Acts viii.), and by Paul when at Ephesus (xix.). On these occasions a gift was bestowed, that of the Holy Ghost. Such was the power delegated to Apostles, but to them only, as Simon Magus understood. Philip could preach with power, and work miracles that astonished the sorcerer. But the Apostles were evidently superior to the evangelist, since by the imposition of their hands the gift of the Spirit was conferred. So in the case of Timothy, he received a gift for his special service of apostolic delegate by the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Tim. i. 6). Now in his case we see illustrated the difference between imposition of hands by an Apostle and that same act on the part of elders. For on the occasion just referred to, the elders laid their hands on Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 14), marked out by prophecy for his work, just as Barnabas and Saul were for theirs, but no gift was communicated to Timothy through them, nor any office thereby conferred. Through the Apostle he received a gift, whilst the elders in laying on their hands recognised his call to the work. The language of the Apostle is clear. We quote the passages: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was

given thee by prophecy, *with* the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. iv. 14); "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by [or, through] the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. i. 6). The *with* and the *through* mark the distinction most clearly. So in Acts xiii. 3 the laying on of hands by the others there mentioned imparted no gift, nor clothed Barnabas and Saul with any authority. It merely expressed the recognition by the rest of the service to which these two were called, and full fellowship with them in their mission. And this Acts xiv. 26, compared with xiii. 4, will confirm. They were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, but they were recommended to the grace of God for the work by their brethren at Antioch.

An Attendant.—Small was the band, just three that we read of—Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark, who had gone with them from Jerusalem to Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were sent by the Holy Ghost; John was their attendant, and a relation of Barnabas. What special duties devolved on him we know not. He soon, however, left them. Had Cyprus any attraction for him at the time as the cousin of Barnabas? We cannot say. All we know is that, shortly after they left Cyprus, Mark left them, and returned to Jerusalem, which was his own home, manifesting, as Paul truly felt, a disqualification for missionary work (xv. 38).

Seleucia.—Without delay they went forth, embarking at Seleucia, the port of Antioch, then a flourishing place with good harbour accommodation, now a ruin and its two basins choked with sand. Of the importance and accommodation of the harbour an idea may be gained, as we learn that the inner basin "covered an area of about forty-seven acres, as large as the export and import basins of our East and West India docks put together."*

Cyprus.—To Cyprus they first went, the native country

* See Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 118, who gives a plan of the port.

of Barnabas, and an island much inhabited by Jews; for at Salamis, the city at which they landed, there were several synagogues, Luke informing us that "they preached in the *synagogues* of the Jews" (xiii. 5). What results there were of their labours, or the length of time that they devoted to that city and neighbourhood, we have no means of correctly ascertaining. Their mission was chiefly to the heathen, though "to the Jew first" was their practice when presenting the Gospel in a new town or district. Through the *whole* island, as we should read, they went from east to west, a journey by land, between Salamis and Paphos, of about the same distance that they had traversed by sea from Seleucia to Salamis—one hundred miles. Doubtless they visited towns and places on the route, and evangelised as they went.

Paphos.—But the historian hastens on to tell us of their visit to Paphos, now *Baffa*, and of the encounter there between an apostate Jew, a sorcerer, and a false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus, and the Apostle of the Gentiles. Like Simon Magus at Samaria, Bar-Jesus had got a footing in Paphos before the visit of Barnabas and Saul. And no less a person than the Roman proconsul,* whose name was Sergius Paulus, had given ear to

* The governor of the island was at this time a *proconsul*, not a *proprætor*, being appointed to his office by the Senate, and not by the Emperor. Luke's designation of him marks, as has been pointed out, his correctness as an historian. "In the time of Augustus (B.C. 27) the various provinces of the Empire were by arrangement divided between the Emperor and the Senate. Those in need of military force were from policy retained by the Emperor for himself, and were under the rule of Prefects appointed by him, called Proprætors. The countries of a more peaceful character were assigned to the Senate, and the governors from time to time nominated by them were called Proconsuls. Cyprus had at first been allotted to the Emperor, and was an Imperial province; but, before Luke wrote, the Emperor and Senate had made an exchange" (Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 125). The exchange took place B.C. 22. See Lewin's *Fasti Sacri*. Other proconsular provinces

him. The proconsul was a man of understanding, and Paphos was the capital of the island. So there he resided, and Bar-Jesus was with him. The governor now desired to hear from the two missionaries the Word of God. Hence began the conflict. Elymas,* the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation, well knew that his influence would be on the wane, if the proconsul listened to the new-comers. So he withstood them, seeking to turn aside Sergius Paulus from the faith.

Which would come off victorious—the sorcerer, that apostate Jew, or the propagators of the new faith, the servants of the Lord Jesus? Prestige of course was with the former. Was he, however, so sure of his ground? Was he really convinced that he could hold his own against Barnabas and Saul? All his efforts were doubtless put forth to deter the governor from giving heed to the truth by them proclaimed. But in vain. For Saul, now coming to the front, in the power of the Spirit dealt with him. Fixing his eyes on him, and filled with the Holy Ghost, Paul, as he is hereafter to be called, addressed him in most solemn language. "O full of all subtilty and all mischief [or, villainy], thou son [not, child] of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (9, 10). Never before, we can well believe, had Bar-Jesus been so addressed. Many perhaps stood in awe of him, afraid of the power which he wielded. Now he met one who was not afraid to encounter him, and to unmask him before all. "Thou son of the devil!" No one in Scripture is designated a child or a son of the devil till he has shown determined and persistent opposition

mentioned in the Acts are Achaia (xviii. 12) and that of Asia (xix. 38). Syria, to which Palestine was subordinate, was under a Prefect.

* Elymas may probably be a title which he arrogated to himself, an Oriental term, to which the Greek *Magos*, a Magian (originally used of the wise men of Persia), came to be applied to designate a wizard, or sorcerer. See Matt. ii. 1 for its use in a good sense.

to the truth. The Jews, after they had wilfully refused the light, were told by the Lord that they were of their father the devil (John viii. 44). And the same writer who has recorded that tells us, that by their *ways* the children of the devil are manifested (1 John iii. 10). So Bar-Jesus, in resisting the truth, and seeking to hinder the proconsul from receiving it, showed himself to be a son of the devil. One of God's ancient people, a Jew, into what depths of evil had he sunk!

But now it should be seen with whom was the power of God, and who were His true servants. The sentence was passed, and in the presence of the assembled company it took immediate effect. "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season" (Acts xiii. 11). A mist and a darkness at once fell on him, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. There was no doubt, there could be none, as to what had taken place. The man who sought to keep the proconsul from the light was now himself enshrouded in darkness. He who would have led, if he could, the governor to resist the truth, was in the presence of all a suppliant for some one who would lead him by the hand! The victory was complete. And the proconsul, "when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine [rather, teaching] of the Lord." The Word had in this most solemn way been confirmed by the sign following (Mark xvi. 20).

Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding, as he is described, had really desired to know the truth. He received it. The sorcerer was discomfited. He became a blind man. What would the Apostles now do? Surely, had temporal gain been their object, they might have remained at Paphos, and have received homage from all. They prepared, however, to leave the island, to which, as far as we know, Paul never returned, though twice subsequently he must have sighted it (Acts xxi. 3, xxvii. 4). One convert they left

behind. But how many more there were as the fruit of that mission we cannot say. That there were more we may be pretty sure, and perhaps Luke's remark, in ver. 13, "Paul and his company," intends us to understand that more passed over to the continent of Asia with him than only Barnabas and Mark.

But two left behind were illustrations, the one of Divine grace, the other of Divine governmental dealing. Sergius Paulus received blessing for *eternity*. Elymas was to be blind *for a season*. Judgment was tempered with mercy. Whether spiritual light ever illuminated that man's soul, neither Luke nor any one else of a later date has recorded. Certainly there was no expression from him even approaching what there was from Simon Magus, when deprecating Peter's stern and withering rebuke. Simon asked for the Apostles' prayers. Bar-Jesus appears to have asked for nothing. The first recorded miracle by the Apostle Paul was then judicial in character. Doubtless, like the death of Ananias and Sapphira, it made a deep impression. The former lied to the Holy Ghost. Bar-Jesus perverted the right ways of the Lord.

Paul.—For Barnabas and Saul the proconsul had called. Till this time they have always been mentioned in this order. Henceforth a change is noticeable. The latter will often, though not always, be named first (xiii. 43, 46, 50, xv. 2, 22, 35), the exceptions to this order being xiv. 14, xv. 12, 25. And now as Paul, and no longer as Saul, is the citizen of Tarsus to be designated. Why this change of name is a matter of conjecture. Some have thought that he took it out of compliment to the distinguished convert Sergius Paulus, a very unlikely supposition. Against this it has been urged, and it has weight, that Luke calls him *Paul* before the proconsul was convinced of the truth of Christianity. And to this one would add, that the historian in no way intimates that the appellation *Paul* was now for the first time bestowed. His manner of introducing

it would confirm such an impression. "Saul, who is also Paul," are his words. The ordinary reader would conclude that Saul already bore the name of Paul. We believe this was the case; and since it was nothing strange for one, a Jew, to bear also a Roman name, the citizen of Tarsus may quite well have been called Paul ere he set foot in Cyprus. So now working among Greeks and Gentiles, since his Hebrew name might to Greek ears convey anything but an honourable title, Saul meaning in Greek *conceited* or *affected*, he was quite satisfied to bear his Roman name, which, if it suggested that he was little of stature, yet spoke to Gentiles of nothing that could excite a prejudice against him. Henceforth then he is called, and he adopted as his name, Paul, not Saul.

Recrossing to the continent, he never again laboured in an island till after his first imprisonment in Rome. Then he visited Crete with Titus (Titus i. 5). In the provinces of Asia Minor, and in those of Macedonia and Achaia and Illyria, he found his sphere of work. So from Paphos they sailed to Perga, the metropolis of Pamphylia, situated on the river Cestus, and about seven miles from the sea. Nothing noteworthy in connection with Perga is mentioned, save that Mark there left them, and returned to Jerusalem. "He went not," said Luke some time after, "with them to the work" (Acts xv. 38). Pushing on north to Antioch in Pisidia, the time to evangelise Perga having evidently not yet come (xiv. 25), they reached the latter city, the capital of the province, and where was a synagogue of the Jews.

Antioch.—Founded, we learn, by the Magnetians, but resettled by Seleucus Nicator, it was called by him Antioch after his father Antiochus, a name which it never lost, though the Romans subsequently planted a colony there and called it Cæsarea. It lay on the road between Ephesus and the Euphrates. In the time of which we are reading it was a flourishing city with a mixed population. "The

Roman colonists spoke Latin, and accordingly many of the inscriptions and coins of the place are in that language; but the Greek settlers ever retained their own tongue, which was intelligible to all; and the lower classes (the native population) still expressed themselves in Pisidian. But besides these nationalities, there was here, as elsewhere, a large admixture of Jews, who were numerous enough to maintain a synagogue." * This extract will give the reader some idea of the nature of the audience which assembled in the synagogue on the second Sabbath of the Apostles' stay in the place—Romans, Greeks, Pisidians, and Jews all gathered together to hear the address from Paul, which the congregation on the previous Sabbath had asked to have repeated (xiii. 42, 44).

A Gospel Address.—What was it which had so interested the congregation? Luke will tell us. Invited by the rulers of the synagogue to address the assembled company, the appointed portions having been already read from the law and from the prophets, Paul rose up and began (xiii. 17-41), addressing both Jews and proselytes, the latter described as "ye that fear God" (16). All doubtless were attentive, and must have listened most earnestly as the stranger proceeded in his discourse, which was, we know, so different from any hitherto heard within the walls of that synagogue. What the portions were which had been read from the Old Testament, we have no means of definitely fixing; for the Apostle made no distinct reference to them. It has been suggested, and we give it for what it is worth, that the portion from the law called in the Jewish lectionary *parashah* was Deut. i.—iii. 22, whilst that from the prophets called *haphtarah* was Isa. i.† We will not, however, linger in the region of

* Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 138.

† Could this suggestion be relied on, it would help to the fixing of the time of year in which they began the work at Antioch. For the Parashah of Deut. i. is the forty-fourth section of the law, which,

uncertainty, but pass on to that which we know, the address which flowed forth on that occasion from the Apostle of the Gentiles.

He spoke of God, the God of their fathers, of His interposition on the nation's behalf when in Egypt, of His caring for them all through the wilderness wanderings, and of His bringing them into the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Further, he reminded them of the care and thoughtfulness of their God after they were settled in that land, in raising up deliverers, rulers, and prophets, till he came down in his recital in the stream of time to David their king. Then, leaping over the intervening centuries, he announced the fulfilment of the promise to David, in that of his seed God had raised up to Israel a Saviour, Jesus. And he fixed the time of this act on the part of God by stating how John had first preached, before the Saviour's coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

God had been faithful then to His word in the past. His promise to Abraham had been fulfilled in bringing Israel out of Egypt, and into the land of Canaan (Gen. xv. 13-16). And God had been faithful to His promise to David in raising up of his seed (2 Sam. vii. 12) in the person of Jesus. Of John the Baptist Paul had spoken. Evidently his audience were acquainted with his history and ministry in the land. Now of Jesus John had spoken as the one of whom he was the immediate forerunner. So turning pointedly to his audience, the Apostle assured them that the tidings he had to communicate were not mere facts of history, but those which concerned all before him most closely. "Brethren, children [or rather, sons] of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to us [rather than, to you] is the word of this salvation

if it is read in order from the Jewish New Year in the autumn, would bring it to just ten weeks before another New Year when Paul stood up and preached.

sent forth" (Acts xiii. 26). The rulers of the synagogue had looked for a word of exhortation. All heard a word of salvation. Present salvation it was, full and free, for all who would receive it. Now salvation in the future Israel expected, and that rightly, but only when their Messiah should appear in person and in power. All knew that event, the theme of prophecy, awaited its fulfilment. Was salvation, however, wholly future? Paul would tell them it was not. There was then, and there is now, a present salvation, even that of the soul. This is true and distinctive Christian teaching. Of this Peter assures converts that it was theirs already (1 Peter i. 9).

But salvation, whether of the soul, or of the whole person, or of the nation of Israel, is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the receiving Him. In none other is there salvation; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Yet the Lord Jesus had been crucified. So of the treatment of Him, and of His rejection by the Jews at Jerusalem, the Apostle proceeds to tell them (xiii. 27-29). In ignorance about Him, and also of their own Scriptures, though the latter were read in their ears every Sabbath day, they had fulfilled them in condemning Him. Then, innocent though He was, they had successfully urged Pilate to crucify Him. He died, therefore, and was buried. The hope of Israel entered into death. Was all lost by His death? God raised Him from the dead, and many witnesses there were still living, who had for many days after His resurrection both seen Him and talked with Him. His resurrection was therefore an undoubted fact, and vouched for by witnesses of unimpeachable character, so that none should discredit it.

Moreover, by His resurrection Scripture would be fulfilled. So now standing forth as an evangelist, the like of which those people had never heard, Paul proceeded: "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise

which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto our [rather than, us their] children, in that He has raised up [not, again] Jesus." Of the Lord's incarnation he here speaks, not of His resurrection. This the Scripture quoted—the second Psalm—makes plain: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." Now all had an interest, if they only knew it, in the incarnation. But more, the Lord was risen, as Paul had already declared. Could Scripture also be quoted bearing on that? It could. And the resurrection shed light on a word in Isa. lv. 3, and showed how the mercies of David, promised long ago, could be made sure. In David's seed as risen from the dead, to return no more to corruption, they could be made good. Was resurrection from the dead a new thought to any there? Had not David written of one—God's Holy One—who should not see corruption? How was that to be fulfilled? Not by preservation from death, but by the resurrection on the third day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Clear was it that David in that sixteenth Psalm, from which the Apostle had just quoted, did not refer to himself, for he died, was buried, and saw corruption. Of another then he wrote, even of Him whom God raised from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Proclamation.—The mercies of David made sure, pardon of sins, which Israel will enjoy in the future, can be known (Isa. lv. 7). And this as a present blessing the Apostle now proceeds to announce. "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified * by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

* There are three prepositions in the Greek New Testament used in connection with the verb *to justify*, and all three occur in two verses in Galatians (ii. 16, 17). We are said to be justified *by*, or *on the principle* of (*ek*), faith, in contrast to works. Justification flows from faith, not from works. Then are we said to be justified instru-

We get here Paul's Gospel, though not all the Gospel that he could set forth, but a fuller Gospel than any hitherto proclaimed in the Acts. For he not only preached *forgiveness* of sins, but announced *justification* likewise. This last is peculiar to him. What a proclamation it was which he here made known! Forgiveness of sins, and justification from all things, from which by the law they could not be justified. Forgiveness of sins! That could be enjoyed then and there, apart from the presentation of any sin-offering on the altar at Jerusalem, the only altar on which a Jew could lawfully offer a sacrifice for a sin. We say for a sin, for that was all that the law afforded, yet not for every sin. Many indeed were the sins—all presumptuous sins—for which the law could make no provision (Numb. xv. 30); but in this proclamation of forgiveness, all sins, however heinous, were included. No need to visit the brazen altar—far off as it was, being at Jerusalem—to get forgiveness such as the law could offer. At Antioch in Pisidia, as they sat on their seats, more than the law could provide for they could have. Forgiveness of sins could be enjoyed, and justification from all things of which there might be need as well. By virtue of the perfect sacrifice of Christ these blessings could be personally and immediately entered into.

A Warning.—Who would not gladly accept such a Gospel? Who would defer closing with such an offer? These questions we might have asked, did we not know something of our own heart. And Paul, who had resisted the truth himself, till he was arrested by the Lord and

mentally *by*, or *through* (*dia*), faith. We are said also to be justified *by*, or *in* (*en*), Christ, in contrast to the being justified *by*, or *in* (*en*), the law. That is to say, we are justified in virtue of, or by, Christ; not in virtue of, or by, law. This last is the phrase met with in our passage, and the mention of "in the law" here in contrast to "in Christ" shows that justification is not taught as flowing from our being in Christ, as some have mistakenly sought to uphold.

converted, knew well the feelings and the prejudices of a Jew. So he wound up his address with an appeal. "Beware," he said, "therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets." And then he reminded them of the words of Habakkuk (i. 5), quoting the Greek Version:* "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your day, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." The prophet who furnished him, when writing to the Romans, with the quotation illustrative of the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith (Hab. ii. 4; Rom. i. 17), is the same who provided him with the arrow to drive home to hearts the word of warning, for any who might be inclined to reject or trifle with that Gospel.

The address was ended. The Gospel had been preached. The appeal not to reject it had been made. We have seen how Peter could preach the Gospel (ii., x.). We learn here how Paul could preach it. It was objective, not subjective, truth on which he chiefly dwelt. He spoke of God, and of His ways, full and varied as they were. God had chosen their fathers. God had exalted them in Egypt, and had brought them out with a high arm. God too had suffered their murmurs in the wilderness, and, destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, had divided it among the tribes by lot. Then He appeared as a *Giver*. He gave them judges and prophets. He gave them too Saul as king. After that He was known as a *Raiser-up*, first of David, then of his seed—Jesus in the incarnation, and last in raising Him up in resurrection. A *Fulfiller* also of promises had He proved Himself to be. A Giver, a Raiser up, a Fulfiller of His promises—what an announcement was heard that day! If such God is, on His word all can and should rest. Who can wonder that such an address deeply

* We have said quoting the Greek Version, for though not altogether verbally the same, it agrees with it in sense, and as having what is not in the Hebrew, "ye despisers," also "and perish."

touched, and interested too, the audience, both Jews and proselytes, or that they desired to hear such words again? For we should read verse 42, "As they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath," and not as in the A.V., that "when the *Jews* were gone out, the *Gentiles* besought," etc. As yet Luke has not noticed the presence of Gentiles in the synagogue.

Another thing may be observed instructive to all preachers of the Gospel—viz., the pains the Apostle took to ground the faith of converts on the written Word. Speaking of God, as we have seen, he refers to facts in history well known to the bulk of his audience. Telling them of the incarnation and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, news the latter was doubtless to many, he turns them to the Old Testament, which they owned was the inspired Word of God, and points out how in the history of the Lord it is fulfilled. Speaking of the incarnation, he quoted the second Psalm, as we have noticed above. There was one to be born in due time, who would by birth into this world be, and be owned by God as, His Son. Of no mere man could that be true. None of us are God's children by natural birth. But the Virgin's Son was, being conceived of the Holy Ghost. To Him then the Psalm pointed, and in His birth at Bethlehem that verse of it quoted by the speaker was fulfilled. Then as to His resurrection and consequences of it, the Apostle would ground their faith on the Scriptures of truth. And whilst the converts might afterwards say, Paul spoke in such an earnest persuasive manner as to carry the hearts of so many with him, they could also say, "But we believe, not because he said it, but because he brought out to us prophetic Scriptures, which treated of these truths."

To sum up the principles in preaching which this Gospel sermon brings out. *Objective* truth was pressed, and that has power, and attraction for souls. Then the faith of the

hearers was sought to be established on the written Word. Would that evangelists more followed the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that master in the art of preaching.

A Chronological Difficulty.—And now a word on a chronological question. According to the common text of xiii. 20, Paul is made to mark the period of the Judges as one of about four hundred and fifty years. This agrees with Josephus (*Ant.*, VIII. iii. 1),* but cannot harmonise with 1 Kings vi. 1, which fixes the commencement of the building of the Temple—which was in the fourth year of Solomon—as having taken place four hundred and eighty years after the Exodus. Now deducting from this the period of the wilderness wanderings, the reigns of Saul and of David, it leaves for the settlement in the land and the time of the Judges combined about three hundred and sixty years before the setting up of a monarchy. Which, then, is right? The statement in Kings is so definite, and was written much nearer the days of Solomon than those of Paul or Josephus, that it naturally claims acceptance on the part of the reader, till distinctly proved to be wrong. How, then, can we get over the difficulty raised by the common text of the Acts? Now the earliest Uncials, with the Vulgate and Memphitic versions, read the passage differently. "He divided unto them the land by lot about the space of four hundred and fifty years. And after that He gave them judges," etc. The years mentioned, therefore, would precede the era of the Judges, and refer to all that had been mentioned as going on before. The acts and

* Josephus dates the commencement of the Temple in the five hundred and ninety-second year after the Exodus. Deducting the wilderness period and the reigns of Saul and David, with the period between the entrance into the land by Joshua and his death and that of the Elders who outlived him, amounting in all to about one hundred and forty years, the residue for the Judges will be about four hundred and fifty. But how would that agree with Jephthah's statement (Judg. xi. 26), which goes far to support the chronology of 1 Kings?

dealings of God related up to the settlement in the land went on, we should then understand, during four hundred and fifty years, dating from the birth of Isaac, when Abraham's seed first became sojourners in a land that was not theirs. Textual critics, as Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, adopt this reading. And it may * well be the solution of the difficulty.

The congregation broke up, and on dispersing requested, as we have already stated, a repetition on the next Sabbath of that to which they had listened. Many, however, of the Jews and proselytes, not content with having heard such an address, felt compelled to follow Paul and Barnabas. Their company they sought. They were to them preachers of good tidings. To these the Apostles further spoke, and persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. Souls had been won for Christ that day. The company of believers on earth had been augmented, and now continuance in the grace of which they had heard became them. What the law could not do for them, that grace had provided, and peace with God—an effect of justification—could be enjoyed; for to continue in the grace made known was the way to have settled peace of conscience. The *effect* of the one address on the congregation was marked. The *results* of it to many were blessed indeed.

* We say *may* because others contend, first, that this solution is untenable, and second, that the Apostle by no means intended that the period of the Judges lasted for four hundred and fifty years, but that in such a period, the commencement of which is not stated, there were in some portions of it judges in the land. Of course ere solving the difficulty we have first to settle the text of the Apostle's speech, and thus to learn what has to be explained. And it has to be decided that the reading of the oldest Uncials is here mistaken, ere the attack on the veracity of the Divine record can hope to succeed.

XI.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED.

ACTS XIII. 44—XIV. 28.

"THE kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (Matt. xiii. 47, 48). Thus had the Lord foretold what the kingdom should resemble after His departure. The parable being a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens, it necessarily described only what would be true when the King had ascended into the heavens; and from the cast of the parable it is apparent, when we read it, that the Lord was contemplating the blessing of Gentiles equally with that of those who had been Jews. The net, He said, gathered of *every* kind. Now that parable, as far as the parable went, stopping short of its full explanation, was to receive abundant illustration at Antioch in Pisidia. And Paul and Barnabas, neither of whom had heard the Master deliver it, were, more than any of the Twelve, to be witnesses of its fulfilment. Paul had preached a gospel never heard in that city or country before. Its first effect was to interest and to attract the congregation in that synagogue. The tidings were by the assembled company wholly unexpected, and the two, strangers to all there, travellers it would appear, whose purpose and service were hitherto unknown, stood forth, one as the herald, but both as witnesses to the truth of that of which Paul spake.

Interest had been aroused. Earnest souls had followed the strangers, their hearts, it appears, opening up to the truth, whilst the whole company had manifested an unusual interest in all that they had heard. Were Paul and Barnabas silent during the week whilst waiting for the next Sabbath? Any opportunity for a public meeting during the interval *may*, very probably, have been denied them. Yet, we may be pretty sure that personal intercourse with them, if sought for, was not denied; and, probably, long ere the next Sabbath drew nigh, the two found themselves no longer quite alone. Hearts, we see, had been touched, and grace doubtless had been laid hold of by some, before opposition was manifested and open rejection of the truth was unmistakably displayed. Souls were already being cared for; the good fish were being, and about in large numbers to be, put into vessels; whilst the bad fish, the rejecters of Divine grace, were cast away. The parable was receiving an illustration, though the full explanation of it awaits its fulfilment at a future day, when "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 49). Meanwhile then, as now, fishermen were at work, looking after the good and putting them into vessels, and leaving the bad for the angels to deal with. At Antioch, at Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe was this service to go forward.

Next Sabbath.—The week went by. The Sabbath came, and with it an enormous increase to the accustomed congregation in that synagogue; for almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord. Previously there had been just Jews and proselytes together; now there was seen a large admixture of Gentiles —natives, many of them, doubtless, of the place. Very probably the most of them had never set foot before within those walls. On this occasion it was evident they could

not stay away. To hear the Word of God they had come; and, though Gentiles, were nevertheless many of them thirsting for truth such as Judaism could not supply, but which these strangers could impart. And now began opposition to the movement. The Jews, to their shame be it said, were filled with envy (or, jealousy) when they saw the multitudes, and spake against the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed ("contradicting and" of the Authorised Version should be omitted). The presence of such a multitude stirred up their jealousy. Paul and Barnabas could command an audience such as *they* had never been able to get. So what had been welcomed the previous week was now denounced and determinedly opposed.

What is man? A Jonah would rather see Nineveh destroyed, to sustain his reputation as a prophet, than that the vast city should be spared on its repentance. These Jews would rather that the Gentiles had been kept in ignorance of the Gospel, to keep up their prestige among them. They could not bear to see these preachers drawing crowds of Gentiles to hear the word of grace, which put all on a common level, and proclaimed that the blessings now being dispensed were equally within the reach of and could be shared in by all. Were Jewish prejudices and jealousy to carry the day? To that the two Apostles would not yield for a moment! So boldly speaking out, they declared before all their opponents and the assembled company, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts xiii. 46, 47). God had then declared by the prophet Isaiah His desire to minister blessing to Gentiles, and His purpose to provide for that through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turning to Gentiles, when the Jews should judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, had been no after-thought in the mind of God. The Gentiles now hearing that were glad. In the scriptures given to Israel there was found this announcement regarding them. Would the Jews boast of a Divine written revelation given only to them? In that, it was now shown, mercy to Gentiles was foretold. Rejoicing at this, they glorified God, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Jews and proselytes had received blessing on the first Sabbath; Gentiles on this the second Sabbath shared in it, and further, the Word of the Lord, Luke writes, was spread abroad throughout all that region. Like a river in flood overflowing its banks, the living waters were no longer confined to the synagogue and to those who attended there. Outside, and beyond the limits of Judaism, they forced their way. But, unlike a river in flood, which causes so often devastation, and may spread dismay, the preaching of the Gospel, in finding ready access to hearts, ministered everlasting blessing and unbounded joy.

Persecution.—The ranks of Judaism, and of heathenism likewise, being thus thinned, and the adherents of the new sect, as the Jews viewed Christians, so increasing, measures were taken to stop, if possible, the movement; to intimidate the converts, and to drive away the Apostles. Apparently not powerful enough in themselves to take the forward place in this work, as their countrymen at Corinth subsequently attempted, they stirred up the devout and honourable women; that is, female proselytes to Judaism of some social standing at Antioch, and with them the chief men of the city. Through these they raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. Thus a slur was to be cast on the preachers, since women of position and men of rank in the place united to drive them away. One can understand what a handle this might give. "Poor ignorant people," it might be said,

"are easily led astray. But see how those who are worthy to be looked up to treat such people! The intelligent and the influential at Antioch will have none of their teaching. Were it only us Jews who made an uproar, it might be put down to our religious prejudices. But if the honourable people of both sexes of the native population, the ancient and honourable, oppose it, there must be something wrong in it." The plot was craftily conceived. Were the Apostles intimidated? "They shook off the dust of their feet against them,"—following in that the Lord's directions both to the Twelve and to the Seventy (Luke ix. 5, x. 10, 11),—and then went to Iconium. Were the converts dismayed and depressed at the departure of their teachers? "The disciples," we read, "were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts xiii. 52). Paul and Barnabas were gone; but the Holy Ghost remained. They were experiencing the truth of the Lord's words (John xvi. 22), for they had a joy which no one could take from them. The Jews might seem to have prevailed: they were really defeated. An assembly was planted. It stood the storm. The Jews might be filled with fury: the converts were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Iconium.—Travelling along the great road eastwards, Paul and Barnabas reached the important town of Iconium, about sixty miles distant. At this point a great road branched northward to the Euxine, to the ancient *Amisus*, now *Samsoun*, whilst the trunk road tended eastward, though circuitously, to Tarsus in Cilicia, and on to the Euphrates. Iconium therefore held an important position geographically, and was the chief town of a small and independent district, governed by a tetrarch. According to Cicero and Strabo, it was the chief town of Lycaonia, and now called Cogni, or Konieh. It has fared better than Antioch, for a town of considerable size still remains, whilst nothing of Antioch has survived the biting tooth of Time.

To the synagogue the two betook themselves, and so

spake that a great number both of Jews and of Greeks believed. The Word here had power, and bore fruit. The enemy also worked, and raised up opposition, for the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren. That people, specially called out by God to witness for Him as the one true God in contrast to idols, here as elsewhere used heathen, and even idolaters, to stay the progress of the truth. Everything seemed against the work. God's ancient people who believed not, and Gentiles who had never known Him, were both arrayed against the Apostles. Yet the work marvellously spread. Nor were the Apostles easily dismayed. "For long time," we read, "abode they there, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, by granting" (rather than, "and granted") "signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Here we read of miracles: at Antioch we read of none. But, as is common in the work among the Gentiles, they have a subordinate place. The word was first spoken, then miracles were wrought in attestation of it. Results were marked, great, and, we may say, immediate: "The multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the Apostles." It was not work done in a corner, nor did the Apostles, like conspirators, carry on their operations in the dark. They worked as those who feared not the fullest publicity. They shrank not from the light. Yet their weapon, to men, might seem a poor one—the Word of God. But it was enough. And from the ranks of the heathen, as well as from those of their own countrymen, converts were gained. Preachers hitherto unknown entered the city and laboured, till Iconium was divided. What reaping had there been! But the very success raised a tumult, two parties being thus found within the city walls, so an organised attack, it was determined, should be made on the Apostles. Warned as to it, they fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia,

and unto the region that lieth round about. Urban and rural districts were visited and evangelised. By persecution the work was more widely spread; the bitterest attacks of the enemy but helped it forward.

Lystra.—In common with Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were situated in the ancient province of Lycaonia, which at this time had been divided into different governments. Iconium, as we have said, was under a tetrarch; Lystra and Derbe were within the territory of Antiochus IV., King of Commagene, and had been since A.D. 37. This fact explains the historian's statement why they fled to Lystra and Derbe, the ruling power of these latter cities being different from that of Iconium. About forty miles separated Lystra from Iconium, and about twenty separated it from Derbe. Christianity, first carried to it by Paul and Barnabas, flourished there for several centuries. Its name is preserved in history, but the proof there of Christianity having flourished is only to be found in the ruins of churches which still remain, and in the modern name of the place, Bin-bir-Kilisseh—*i.e.*, the thousand and one churches. How has the light which once shone in it been quenched!

A Cripple Healed.—Preaching the Gospel there, a cripple from birth, being impotent in his feet, his name unknown to us, was one of the audience. He heard Paul speak, and was doubtless attracted by tidings to which he had never previously listened, and unconscious of the temporal blessing in store for him. We can fancy him sitting with his eyes fixed on the Apostle. The Apostle now fixed his eyes on him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet." "He leaped up," we read, "and walked." He was walking! To spring up was the act of a moment, and never repeated; so the aorist tense is used by Luke in relating it. He walked—*i.e.*, was walking; so the imperfect tense describes it.

The Multitudes.—The effect on the man described, the effect on the multitudes is next stated. Probably the miracle had been worked in the open air, the Apostles preaching in public, for there is no mention of a synagogue there, nor at Derbe. Multitudes then could see what had been done. The impotent man was on his feet, and was using his legs in a way he had never done. All were struck with astonishment, and, speaking in their own tongue—Lycaonian—they explained the phenomenon by the presence, as they thought, of the gods in human form. Barnabas they supposed was Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. The whole city was astir. And the priest of Jupiter, preparing to welcome the supposed gods in a becoming way, brought oxen and garlands unto the gate, to honour them by sacrifice. That intention, on learning of it, was frustrated by the immediate interposition of the Apostles, who rending their garments, rushed, or sprang forth,* perhaps from their lodgings, to which they had retired. Now among the people collected with the priest and the sacrificial victims, they addressed them. The homage they declined, and instead of receiving a sacrifice they would teach the crowd. The text of that address Luke here relates; we give it in full.

The Address.—"Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you [not, us] rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling your [not, our] hearts with food and gladness."

* The "ran in" of the Authorised Version should be given up for "sprang forth," which is generally accepted as the better reading.

We learn from this how Paul could speak to *ignorant* heathen, as we afterwards see how he addressed the *intelligent* and the *educated* heathen at Athens.

Of God he speaks, the living God, the Creator of all things, even heaven, earth, and sea, and all things that are in them. To make Him known to the Lystrans he and Barnabas had visited their city, seeing that to become acquainted with the Divine mind was God's desire for His creatures. That accounted for their presence there. Idols were to be turned from, the living God was to be acknowledged. What then could Paul tell about Him, hitherto to them unknown? They were indebted to God, whom he preached, for rain from heaven, and for the fruitful seasons which had so often gladdened their hearts. A God of whom they were ignorant, and had never served, was yearly and constantly thinking of, caring for, and ministering to them. No religion in the heathen world would have taught them that. It was new teaching indeed. There Paul stopped. Had he missed an opportunity of presenting the Gospel? We believe not. He was meeting those ignorant heathen on ground which they could all understand—viz., the blessings which as creatures they had enjoyed. He was acting in the spirit of the Master, who when on earth addressed the multitude as they were able to hear it (Mark iv. 33). So here Paul dwelt on the beneficence of God, manifesting His desire to do His creatures good in filling their hearts with food and gladness. To have quoted Old Testament scripture on this occasion would have been out of place. What did these Lycaonians know of a Divine written revelation? To have quoted from the writings of Greek poets might have been equally unsuitable.* He appealed to that with which all were familiar, the rain and the crops, and told them by whom these favours, which

* It has been suggested that the Apostle quoted from some lyric poet, whose name and whose writings are however quite unknown. It is but a conjecture, as yet incapable of proof.

ministered to their daily necessities, were provided. At Antioch in Pisidia he spoke, as we have seen, of the *goodness* and *faithfulness* of God to Israel. At Lystra he spoke of the *goodness* of God to His creatures. It is one step gained when a right thought of God is implanted in a heart hitherto estranged from Him (Col. i. 21).

Stoning.—Faithful as the servants of the living God, they thus, though with difficulty, restrained the multitudes from sacrificing to them. A new experience now awaited Paul. He had escaped for his life from Damascus. He had fled with Barnabas from Iconium, when an onset was made to use them despitefully. Now pursued by Jews from Antioch and Iconium, with the cognisance of the people of Lystra, they succeeded in stoning him. Had they accomplished their purpose and silenced for ever the voice of that man whom they could not overcome by their arguments? It seemed like it when they dragged him out of the city supposing that he was dead. Thus far had they been allowed to go. But his life was in God's hands. Something of the great things that he must suffer for Christ's sake he had now experienced. Stoned, and left for dead, his enemies were satisfied. Now the Lord worked and raised up His servant. For, when surrounded by the disciples, with sorrowful hearts we may well believe, and doubtless to the surprise of all, he rose up and re-entered the city. On the morrow able to travel, he went with Barnabas to break new ground at Derbe. His life seemed a charmed one. Not only did he revive, but he was able for the twenty miles' journey on the next day, and to begin in a new place to preach the glad tidings of salvation.

Derbe.—A small town Derbe appears to have been, situated near a large lake now called *Ak Ghieul*, but its identification—for no modern town represents it—is still a matter of conjecture. Here, as we have already remarked, we have no mention of a synagogue. The Jews, if any,

must have been but few in the place. So a time of quiet seems to have succeeded the storm experienced at Lystra. The hostile Jews who had followed their steps from Antioch and Iconium, pursued them no farther. And so no opposition at Derbe is even hinted at. Now, remembering that it was generally the Jews who raised the disturbance, making Gentiles their tools, it is not surprising, if Jews there were but few, that freedom from persecution was vouchsafed them in that city. And with this agrees the reference by Paul, many years later, to the treatment he met with on the journey, at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra (2 Tim. iii. 11), which omits any mention of opposition at Derbe. Here then they were permitted to labour in peace, evangelising as was their wont; and great blessing was the result. For they made many disciples (Acts xiv. 21), as we should rather translate. A breathing time was granted them.

Timothy.—At this point we may notice one who was marked out to be a most devoted companion of the great Apostle and a very true-hearted labourer (Phil. ii. 19-22). We allude to Paul's own child in the faith, Timothy (1 Tim. i. 2), the son of Eunice and the grandson of Lois, two godly women who embraced Christianity. Of what town he was a native it is difficult to say. Very probably he belonged to Lystra. Certainly the province of Lycaonia could claim him as one of her sons, who was destined to be imperishably connected with the early history of Christianity from his close and long association with the Apostle Paul. Converted by Paul on his first missionary journey, Timothy was found on his second journey to have been well reported of by the Christians at Lystra * and Iconium (Acts xvi. 1). The work in the young man was real. It had stood. It bore fruit. And never after had any one reason to discredit his conversion.

* Very probably from the mention of Lystra here before Iconium it was Timothy's native city.

His walk and his service showed unmistakably that he was a real and earnest Christian. Converted by Paul, who calls him his own child in the faith, we have nevertheless no details about that change wrought in Timothy, nor have we been told when exactly, or where, it took place; nor does Luke allude to him at all, till he joined Paul, never to turn from him whilst the latter was in life. Details of conversions are very rarely introduced by the beloved physician. It is interesting to note, however, how links are formed by God of lasting continuance, though the people thus first brought together cannot forecast their future.

The Return.—From Derbe they retraced their steps to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Important work lay before them. They had been evangelising as they passed from city to city, and many converts were the result. Would they leave them, when just converted, to get on as best they could? That, we learn from 1 Thess. ii. 17, 18, iii. 10, was not the desire of the Apostle Paul. Establishing converts in the faith he knew was needed; and if permitted, he delighted to revisit former scenes of labour to do it. And no persecution that he had met with could deter him from such a service, though, as in the case of the Thessalonians, circumstances might prevent it. At this time, however, there were no hindrances, so they turned back to the cities from which they had been driven, taking them in regular, and so in the inverse, order.

Building up.—And now teaching and pastoral care were called into exercise, the Apostles being especially occupied with the growth and well-being of the Christians. Revisiting those cities, they found ample scope for such service, and were free to carry it out; for we read not of any fresh outbreak of feeling against them in the streets of Antioch or Iconium. And even in Lystra Paul could evidently walk in safety, though on his first visit he had been dragged out of it for dead. The Gospel is necessarily

aggressive. It arouses animosities in those who would pose as champions of traditional religion. Ministering to converts, however, might proceed, though even that is not always the case, without fresh demonstration of hostility. Thus it was. So to *confirming* and to strengthening the souls of the disciples Paul and Barnabas especially addressed themselves. The spiritual life imparted through the Word by the Spirit should exhibit growth and development. For that a teaching ministry is provided (Eph. iv. 12). To be built up in Christ and established in the faith is needful for the well-being of every believer (Col. ii. 7). Well were the workmen in early days aware of this, and they sought as enabled to effect it (Acts xv. 32, 41, xviii. 23). For this service was not confined to Apostles; witness Judas, Silas, and also Timothy (1 Thess. iii. 2). In the Acts we read that it *was* done; in the Epistles (Rom. i. 11, xvi. 25; 2 Peter i. 12) we see *how* it could be done. *Confirmation*, then, in the New Testament was not an ecclesiastical rite, but a ministering to *souls*. And here exhortation could find scope for its exercise, and encouragements to stand fast in the faith would be in season. So we read that they exhorted the disciples to continue in the faith, adding (the historian seemingly here reproducing the very words of the Apostles), "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). Fitting, indeed, was it for them thus to speak, and with power must their exhortation have fallen on the disciples. All knew, and some had witnessed, what Paul and Barnabas had suffered for the truth.

Of the names of any of the converts in Asia Minor who listened to these exhortations we are in perfect ignorance, save probably those three already mentioned, Timothy and Lois and Eunice. For somewhere, in one or more of the cities named, may we not without rashness hazard the conjecture that Timothy was a listener to the two Apostles when they thus addressed the saints? Much tribulation,

or rather many tribulations, they spoke of. What such might be Timothy had seen exemplified in the experience of Paul at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra (2 Tim. iii. 11). So he would in a measure be prepared for any to which he might some day be called. Yet, prepared too to expect deliverance in one way or another, even as the Apostle reminded him, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me."

Of entering the kingdom through tribulation they had spoken, yet their hearers had already entered into it, spiritually, by the new birth (John iii. 5). There is, however, the entering into it in *person*, when the Lord shall have come for His own; for nothing short of salvation for the whole man is God's purpose for His heavenly saints. Between these two events, however, much tribulation may be experienced. To this latter entrance Peter refers (2 Peter i. 11); and of this Paul many years after reminded his own child in the faith, as he quoted, for his benefit primarily, and surely for ours also, one of the five faithful sayings, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" etc., (2 Tim. ii. 12). These, part of Paul's last words to Timothy with which we are acquainted, may well have recalled to his mind many incidents of that first missionary journey, and the exhortation above quoted, given to all the converts.

Elders.—The establishing of the saints thus cared for, provision, we find, was also made for the maintenance of order in the assembly by the appointment of Elders. We have read of the institution of a diaconate at Jerusalem; now of the institution of an elderhood in the different assemblies recently formed we are to learn. Elders were officials appointed by Apostles,* or by their delegates, as Titus, and very likely also Timothy. Of Titus being entrusted with this service we read distinctly (Titus i. 5). Of Timothy's authority for that there is no mention. From

* They, *i.e.*, Paul and Barnabas, ordained or appointed for them elders—so we should read. The appointment was by the Apostles, not by the assembly.

the tenor of 1 Timothy, we may however say, it is not unlikely that he did appoint them, empowered for that by the Apostle, like his brother labourer Titus. Elders were to keep order, to rule in the assembly (1 Tim. iii. 5, v. 17; Titus i. 9). They were also to shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter v. 1-3). And whereas Elder was their title of dignity, Bishop or overseer was that which described them in their work (Acts xx. 28; 1 Tim. iii. 1-5; Titus i. 5, 7-9). Their jurisdiction, as that of Deacons, was *local.* So Paul and Barnabas appointed them *in every city,* and there might evidently be several in a place (Acts xx. 17; Phil. i. 1). They might also be such as laboured in the Word, but they were not labourers in the Word by virtue of their office (1 Tim. v. 17). A labourer in the Word is a gift from the ascended Christ, and given by Him to men (Eph. iv. 8); so his sphere of service is worldwide. The Elder or Deacon was an Elder or Deacon only in the local assembly where he served. In every city on this tour they appointed Elders. But it does not appear that ever after the Apostle always carried out this practice. We have no hint of any in Thessalonica, and the injunctions in 1 Thess. v. 11-13 seem to militate against the supposition of their existence in that assembly. Further, appointed, where they existed, by the Apostles or delegates, and made Bishops or overseers by the Holy Ghost (Acts xx. 28), we never read that they had power to appoint Elders in their room. Apostles could delegate power to others to ordain Elders. Those so delegated, it is plain, could have no inherent authority to transmit their power to others. Will it be said that 2 Tim. ii. 2 sanctions ordination by Elders, and that to the end of time? It furnishes, it must be replied, no warrant for such an assumption. The passage, as we have already pointed out (p. 169), speaks of what Timothy had heard, not of power, nor of authority which he had received. He was to hand on what he had heard to faithful men who could teach others also. One can hear

doctrine and hand it on. One cannot hear authority—one receives that. One can teach truth, but authority is conferred, not taught. As little could an Elder in apostolic times ordain another Elder, as Timothy or Titus could appoint apostolic delegates in their room.

Do any ask, Why then have we those portions in the pastoral Epistles relating to the qualifications of Elders, etc.? The answer is plain. Given of course as they were first to Timothy and Titus respectively for their guidance, they furnish us with information as to the requisite qualifications for any discharging such duties. When any now are found to whom those descriptions apply, and being in themselves willing thus to serve, room should gladly and thankfully be accorded them for the work. To shepherd or tend the flock is a useful service indeed, and is needed as much as ever,—as well surely as Peter's admonition to the Elders of his day, not to lord it over the heritage, but to be examples to the flock (1 Peter v. 3). Grace then is called for on the part of such serving, as well as on that of those served. As none can now claim the authority, in grace let them work (1 Peter v. 2), and graciously let the rest give them room for their work. Aware that on this subject the reader may have a different judgment, as the writer had long ago, we would only add, that to Scripture we must all go, and by that be taught. Well does the writer remember how hard he fought against the truth of this matter, but found Scripture against his preconceived ideas about it, so he had to give in.

Return to Antioch.—Important points come out as we reconsider the history of this journey. We have learnt by it how Paul could preach the Gospel to Jews (xiii.), and how he could adapt himself to ignorant heathen (xiv.). We see that whilst rejoicing in the work of evangelising, neither Barnabas nor he neglected the important service of establishing the converts in the faith. Each line of service, however, had its time and place. We notice also the

provision made for shepherding the sheep, and for preserving order in the assemblies. This last arranged for, they took their departure from the scene of such marked blessing vouchsafed to them. Passing then through Pisidia, they came back to Perga in Pamphylia, in which after now speaking the word, they went down to a seaport named Attalia, about sixteen miles distant, "situated on the north-eastern corner of a fine bay, and possessing a good haven, round which the city rose like a vast amphitheatre."* The port is still frequented, and is known by the name of *Adalia.* Embarking thereat, they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been commended for the work which they had fulfilled.

Gladly must the Church in that city have welcomed back the travellers, after an absence, it is considered, of nearly two years. Joy too must have filled many a heart as they listened to the story of the work among the heathen. How much had those two to tell! Their visit to Cyprus, their labour there, and the conversion of Sergius Paulus the proconsul, must greatly have interested those acquainted with the island. Then they could give an account of their labours in the provinces of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia, of the persecutions encountered, of Paul's remarkable preservation from death at Lystra, and of his speedy recovery from the effects of that attempt on his life. Amid, however, all this of which we have read, we have no account of the number of professed converts, nor a record of those baptised, nor any extract from a roll of communicants in any of the towns in which they had worked. Indeed, of Christian baptism we have never a word throughout this journey, though we may be sure it was not neglected. These at times prominent statistics in the records of modern missions are generally absent from the inspired account of Gospel work among the Gentiles. And as without salary Paul and Barnabas laboured, so to men they owed no account of their success. The record is with God.

* Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 155.

XII.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

ACTS XV. 1-35.

A TIME of rest from travel was permitted to these two labourers, Paul and Barnabas. At Antioch, from whence they had started on their missionary tour, they abode on their return no little time. On incidents in connection with ministry there at this time Luke does not dwell, but gives us to know, that though resting from the fatigue of frequent travel, the happy service of quietly ministering to saints was disturbed by controversy in the assembly. "Certain men came down from Judæa, and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts xv. 1).

The Interruption.—From Judæa they came, the stronghold of Judaism. Doubtless that fact was pressed on the converts at Antioch, and very likely it invested these new teachers with a prestige which otherwise they would not have possessed. Christianity had begun at Jerusalem. There too were still found some who had known the Lord in life, which Paul had not. To those in Judæa, therefore, should not the men of Antioch look, to learn fully about Christianity? Native-born Jews, just fresh from the cradle of the faith, should surely know better than Hellenists like Paul. We can well understand what specious arguments, at the enemy's leading, might have been resorted to, in order to gain a hearing and

acceptance for these men. But who were they? Their names are now unknown, though very likely they posed then as no mean authorities for Christian teaching. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* *

Who sent them? Not the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem, for they disclaimed all responsibility in the matter (xv. 24), however much some may have sympathised with them in their doctrine. Yet very likely the names of leaders in Jerusalem were used to give weight to the proposition now propounded (Gal. ii. 12), that circumcision was an essential requisite for salvation. We can well believe what a stir was made, for converts there were at Antioch of some years' standing. And though they had prophets among them, by whom the mind of God had been made known, no revelation of such a character as this had been uttered by any of them. Were the converts then from Gentiles still unsaved? Much, of course, had many there learnt from Paul and Barnabas. But had those devoted workers kept back such important teaching? or were they in ignorance of it? Undoubtedly both of them had been circumcised; yet they had never pressed that rite on converts from the Gentiles, though all the earliest converts to Christianity bore on their person the mark of circumcision. Could it be then that these new teachers were right, and the two Apostles wrong? Appearances might seem to favour such a surmise, when it was remembered that the first Apostles of the Lord had all been circumcised, and had also conformed to the requirements of the law. Hence a conflict arose, which was, we may well believe, keenly carried on; for Paul and Barnabas "had no small dissension and questioning with them." The work of building up souls was thus to be arrested by the controversy now raised, and carried on with persistency and vigour characteristic of sectarian zeal. So doubtless had plotted the enemy.

* Thus passes away worldly glory.

Circumcision.—In what light Paul viewed this teaching, save that he resolutely opposed it, the Acts affords us no further help. The Epistles, however, make this plain, and show what a vital question was raised by those self-appointed teachers. Between them and Paul it was not a mere matter of opinion, in which each disputant might without harm retain his own conviction. In the eyes of the Apostle it was a deadly scheme which had been propounded, for it subverted the truth of Christianity. Much, very much, was imperilled by the claim for circumcision now put forward. Let us look a little into this.

Circumcision was of the fathers, not of Moses, the Lord had declared, though taught Israel by Moses (John vii. 22); and it was the sign of a covenant made by God with Abraham and his seed after the flesh, relating both to fruitfulness of offspring and to the possession of the land of Canaan as their inheritance: and God would be their God (Gen. xvii. 11-14). Now all those on whom circumcision was to be imperative were either Abraham's seed, those born in their houses, or those bought with their money. And later on, the stranger, called in Hebrew *Ger*, who would make his home in the midst of Israel, if desirous to keep the Passover, had to be circumcised with all the males in his house (Exod. xii. 48). At the first blush of the question, then, the converts to Christianity from Gentiles were neither Abraham's seed after the flesh, nor born in the house of a Jew, nor the latter's property by purchase, nor strangers desiring to celebrate the Passover. Why then should they be circumcised? An answer to this question in favour of these new teachers, which could satisfy reflecting minds, it would be impossible to give. But there was more to be urged against this doctrine than simply the lack of authority to circumcise Gentiles. This Paul brought out.

In 1 Cor. vii. 19 we learn that circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the command-

ments of God. That is, obedience to God is of real importance, and not the having submitted to the external rite instituted in Gen. xvii. or the contrary. If one was called having been previously circumcised, let him not efface that mark from his body; if called uncircumcised, let him not be circumcised. God was dealing with men now as men, and not primarily with an elect nation, the seed of Abraham. Hence neither the one condition nor the other was of importance in the Church of God.

Turning next to Romans, we are there taught that what is now to be sought after is reality of heart before God, and not a distinguishing mark on one's body. And the former only are now true Jews in spirit, according to the meaning of the word *Jew—i.e.*, praise. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). He who could boast of having been circumcised on the eighth day, as the law enjoined, teaches that what is now to be valued is circumcision of the *heart*, and not of the *letter*. And those who were now only characterised by the outward rite he designates as the *concision*, claiming true circumcision alone for those who worship * by the Spirit of God, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. iii. 2-5). Far behind then in understanding the mind of God for their day were those self-constituted teachers, whose very names have fittingly and significantly sunk into oblivion. They had come to Antioch, and pressed their claim to be listened to on the uncircumcised converts in that city, as coming from head-

* "Worship by the Spirit of God." This is what the Apostle wrote. He was not speaking of the character of worship as being *spiritual* in contrast to *ceremonial*, but of the One by whom alone we can worship God now, even the Holy Ghost. But, worshipping by Him, we need scarcely say that it will be spiritual worship.

quarters, even from Judæa. In reality they needed to learn for themselves the rudiments of Christian teaching.

But there was more at stake, and this in the Epistle to the Galatians is plainly set forth. Unless ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved, so averred those men. "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," Paul could reply (Gal. v. 2). Would they insist on the converts keeping the law? Paul would meet that with a solemn assurance. "I testify unto every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. v. 3, 4). Would any following such perverted teaching put themselves under law? They thereby put themselves under bondage to keep the law (Gal. iv. 21-31). And all their hopes of the future inheritance would, as far as they were concerned, become vain, for they came under a curse if they failed in the observance of even one command (Gal. iii. 10).

Further, all who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins had received the gift of the Holy Ghost (Eph. i. 13), and so were Christ's (Rom. viii. 9), which is the same as being in Christ (Gal. iii. 28, 29). They were also members of His body (1 Cor. xii. 13). Full Christian blessing, therefore, was theirs already. Abraham's seed they were also as in Christ. What then could circumcision do for them? What could these teachers minister of Christian blessing which was not theirs already? Nothing. But what harm could they do? Much indeed. For any who imbibed such teaching, and kept to it, would fall from grace. No wonder then that Paul earnestly withstood it. It was really, as we learn, subversive of Christianity. In Christ all true believers really were. Now in Him "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6). And again he states (Gal. vi. 15) that "neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature [or,

creation]." Differing as light from darkness, or as day from night, was the true Christian teaching upheld by Paul from that Judaising teaching sought to be introduced by these unauthorised missionaries. Then too the effect of such doctrine was withering to the spirit. Biting and devouring one another would be displayed, and the observance of days, of months, of times, and of years would be introduced. Writing as to this last, Paul tells the Galatians, who were adopting it, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (iv. 11).

Firmly, determinedly did Paul and Barnabas oppose these men. They were false brethren, as Paul terms them, who came in privily to spy out the liberty of the saints in Christ. To such he would not give way for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with the converts from heathenism (Gal. ii. 4, 5). But how should this question be satisfactorily settled? Paul and Barnabas taught one thing; those teachers from Judæa taught another. Yet it must be settled, else the peace of the assembly would be destroyed, parties be formed, and divisions result. It was then determined that Paul and Barnabas, with certain others, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about it (Acts xv. 2). They went, but Paul went up by revelation, he tells us (Gal. ii. 2). The Holy Ghost was guiding, that real blessing should come out of it, and the enemy be quite outwitted.

Titus.—Who formed the company we shall never know on this side of death. Of one only we learn who accompanied the Apostles—viz., Titus, already converted, and that by Paul (Titus i. 4), but when and where are points alike concealed from us. In Galatians (ii. 1) we read of him as now with Paul, so he joined that Apostle's company earlier than Timothy. And as a protest against that Judaising teaching and a vindication of the truth, Titus, who by birth was a pure Gentile, Paul took up with him, but uncircumcised. So at Jerusalem the brethren, in

welcoming Paul and his company, welcomed an uncircumcised Christian in their midst. And wherever they stopped on their route, and they evidently did at places, whilst great joy was caused by their announcement of the conversion of Gentiles, the ground taken up by Paul and Barnabas at Antioch was firmly and openly maintained throughout, as Titus was seen in their company, a joint partaker of grace, a member of Christ, and a fellow-heir with all true believers of the inheritance in the future.

Reception at Jerusalem.—Great joy was manifested by the disciples in Phœnicia and Samaria, as they heard of the conversion of Gentiles. We have no mention, however, of any such expression on the part of the assembly at Jerusalem. Possibly the strong Judaising element there made Paul and Barnabas to be regarded with some degree of suspicion, and this surmise receives support from the Apostle Paul's own account of his visit to Jerusalem at this time. "I went up," he writes, "by revelation; and I laid before them [better than, communicated unto them] that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain" (Gal. ii. 2). It would seem as if reports had reached those at Jerusalem about him and Barnabas, not tending to enhance their reputation as faithful labourers and conservators of the truth. The result he tells us was, that to his Gospel the chiefs at Jerusalem could add (or, impart) nothing. "But contrariwise," he writes, "when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the

circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do" (Gal. ii. 7-10). All distrust and distance seemed effectually removed. The special sphere of labour to which Paul and Barnabas had been called at Antioch they fully recognised, as much as that committed especially to the twelve. But we must not anticipate.

Reaching Jerusalem, they rehearsed to the assembly, and to the Apostles, and to the Elders, all things that God had done with them. A hearing having been thus at once accorded them to relate the success of their mission among the heathen, the opposition raised its voice, and formulated its dogma—viz., "That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts xv. 5). The promulgators of this dictum were certain of the sect of the Pharisees, to which sect Paul had once belonged. How low he must have fallen, they would think. How far had he been diverted from what was right, they evidently would affirm. Now the controversy which had been carried on at Antioch was transferred to Jerusalem. All felt the matter an important one, so the Apostles and the Elders, but not the assembly, met together to consider it.

The Conference.—The discussion was free. Neither Peter nor James spoke at the outset of it, nor did Paul or Barnabas take part till many probably had had their say. For not till there had been *much* disputing (or, questioning) did Peter rise to speak. All therefore, we may be well assured, that the advocates of the Judaising element could advance had been put forward. Then Peter arose, and could claim a hearing, not only as an Apostle, but as the one chosen of God by whom Gentiles had first heard the word of the Gospel and believed. Now to that company, as he reminds his hearers, God gave the Holy Ghost, "even as He did," said Peter, "unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

Were Cornelius and his friends circumcised in order to be saved? Had they been circumcised since that day? All knew they received salvation as they sat on their seats listening to Peter. Was that an assumption on Peter's part? He adduced proof of it, which none could gainsay. God, who knew their hearts, gave them then and there the Holy Ghost, which ensured full Christian blessing. The history of Cornelius and his friends negatived the contention of these pharisaic brethren. Circumcision could not be a necessary prelude to salvation; for those, to whom Peter had preached at Cæsarea, had received the latter without first submitting to the former. Would the objectors argue that purification by legal ceremonies was imperative? Such could really only avail to the sanctifying of the flesh. But God looks at the heart. Now He had purified the hearts of those Gentiles by faith. Let them read the history of that visit to Cæsarea in its right light. They would see the mistake of their contention. Thus the ground was being cut away from under their feet, and that by the Apostle of the circumcision.

But Peter had more to say, and none but one who had been a Jew could so well press the next point, as none but those who had been Jews could so well appreciate it. Were the objectors enamoured of the law? Had they found freedom under it? Had they not, on the contrary, felt its claims burdensome indeed, a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear? Would they burden others with a yoke which they had found so heavy? As little weight was to be attached to this contention of the Gentiles keeping the law as to any other which had been advanced. "For we believe," continued Peter, "that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, even as they." Salvation therefore for each and all was not by keeping the law. It is by faith (Eph. ii. 8).

The Apostle had finished. Silence reigned where discussion had been rife. Peter, the Apostle to the circumcision,

boldly resisted the dogma which had been propounded. His speech, it would seem, was felt to be unanswerable. No one rose to support what we might call the opposition; for the whole multitude kept silence, to let Barnabas and Paul give proofs of the real work of God among the Gentiles. Both these Apostles spoke—Barnabas first, Paul next. They could tell much of deep interest, and doubtless details of many conversions. But the tenor of their addresses was to make known what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Important was this, because it conclusively established that the work among the Gentiles was signally owned by God. He was working, and had worked, specially by those who refused to sanction the introduction among the converts in heathen lands of Jewish rites, or their being put under law. Could any then doubt that Paul and Barnabas were in the right, and those Judaising teachers were in the wrong?

James now rose. His words were directed, not to refute the propositions advanced, which Peter had sufficiently done, but to bring Scripture to bear on the matter. What light would it cast on the subject? He quoted from the prophet Amos a passage which foretold blessing to Gentiles (Amos ix. 11, 12).* That such should confess the Lord and be called by His name was then no afterthought of the Divine mind. Yet nowhere did the prophetic word hint at the necessity for them to be circumcised. Hence the silence of Scripture on the matter afforded light on the controversy. God knew from the beginning what He would

* James quotes from the Greek version of Amos, but not even from that with exactness, save that for the point in hand—viz., Gentiles to be called by God's name—he quotes the Greek with verbal correctness. And he winds up with the reminder, that God makes things known from the beginning of the world. Joel (Acts ii.), Habakkuk (Acts xiii.), Amos, are each brought forward as needed. Portions of the Word, perhaps much seldomer read than Isaiah or the other great prophets, are found helpful, and can throw light at times on the matter in hand.

do. If then He had not spoken of circumcising such, who should enjoin it? Where Scripture was silent, let them be silent. How wise! Would that in later days this simple principle, which commends itself at once, had been more carried out!

Three steps had been taken in this controversy. *First*, the ground of the objectors was completely cut away. *Next*, that God was working among Gentiles was undeniably established. *Third*, Scripture, though foreseeing that, nowhere taught that they should be circumcised. To Scripture teaching all must bow. As God had not enjoined circumcision on Gentiles, neither could the Apostles and Elders. Nor under the law could they put them. Yet there were certain things from which these once Gentiles in common with these once Jews must abstain as *creatures* of God. These James intimates—viz., pollution of idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood, assigning as a reason that "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day" (Acts xv. 21). All might learn from the Pentateuch God's mind for *men*. So all must conform to that as worshippers of the one true God, and sharers in Divine grace. It was patent that idolatry must be renounced by the converts. The Thessalonian saints subsequently bore testimony to this, for they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. i. 9). And a danger there was, unless it was given up, of pandering to it, as illustrated by the Corinthians (1 Cor. viii., x.), and by those at Pergamos (Rev. ii. 14). Next, God's institution of marriage, a provision against fornication (1 Cor. vii. 2), was for the benefit of the whole human race. So that sin, but little frowned on among the Gentiles, must be renounced by disciples of the Lord Jesus. And lastly, the prohibition against eating blood must be enforced. This dated from the days of Noah, and was imposed on Noah and on his sons (Gen. ix. 4) just after the flood. It clearly concerned the whole human family.

Here it might be asked, Did not the law prohibit eating blood? Unquestionably. Was not James then really putting the converts from heathenism under the law by this? Not at all. The law did prohibit it, but under a penalty (Lev. xvii. 10-12). Gen. ix. 4 prohibited it, but mentioned no penalty. In perfect keeping was this with dispensational teaching. To those placed under law a penalty attached to the infraction of the command. To those never under law, as Noah and his sons, no penalty was prescribed for disobedience in this respect. Now that command, then given, has never been cancelled, so is binding, of course, on all Noah's descendants. On it then James insisted, but not as a penal enactment. There are things forbidden in the Word to men as men. There are also things forbidden to those under law. So whilst upholding the perfect freedom of converts from the Gentiles from the yoke sought to be imposed on them, whatever God's Word had said to men as men, and had not cancelled, remained in force, and must be attended to. Well indeed were they guided at this conference, steering clear of any insistence on the converts in question being put under law, but steering clear equally of any relaxation of the Divine injunctions for the whole human race. The manner too of handling the controversy is worthy of notice. One may refute a proposition by showing the untenableness of it. This Peter did. One may also seek for light on it from the written Word of God. This James did. Thus the matter, to use a modern expression, was thoroughly thrashed out. Unanimity now prevailed, where diversity of judgment had been freely declared.

The Resolution.—James proposed writing to the Christians at Antioch. This resolved upon by the whole Church, in common with the Apostles and Elders, they proceeded to choose their messengers who should accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return. The selection was made. Judas named Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren, were fixed upon to carry the proposed letter from

the Apostles and Elders to express their judgment on the question that had been raised, and to confirm by word of mouth what had been resolved upon at the conference. Some from Jerusalem had troubled the assembly at Antioch with their Judaising dogmas. Judas and Silas should go from Jerusalem as witnesses of the statement in the letter which they carried, that those in authority in Judæa repudiated the teaching of the disturbers of converts amongst the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas could and would surely declare that. Confirmation then of it should be forthcoming by the witnesses, who would substantiate what the other two might aver.

The Letter.—Dismissed, they went down to Antioch, bearing the first, and the only formal communication with which we are acquainted, from those in authority at Jerusalem to the brethren from the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. "The Apostles and the elder brethren," so it ran (we give the Revised Version), "unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting: Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment; it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well."

The question raised, a vital one as to doctrine, was also vital as to fellowship. For if the troublers had been correct, fellowship of Gentile converts with those at Jeru-

salem depended on the former submitting themselves to all the ordinances of the law. Hence they might naturally desire to know on what terms Christian fellowship could be maintained, and interchange of communion could take place. It was then for those at Jerusalem to make that plain. This they did. Hence their letter. There was, be it observed, no assertion of the rights and primacy of a metropolitan see, the occupant of which could lay down the law for others. Surely, if any city could claim that, Jerusalem might, which had been, and still was, the home of Apostles. The Apostles and Elders wrote to their brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. It was not James, or John, or Peter, or all of them apart from others not reckoned in the Apostolate, who fulminated a decree. It was brethren writing to brethren. And the letter, though firm in character, was gracious in tone. So, whilst it did not exact implicit obedience on pain of excommunication, yet the godly at Antioch and elsewhere would have hesitated to refuse for one moment to subscribe to its teaching, seeing that it only affirmed and insisted upon that which for ages and ages had been the will of God for His creatures of the human race.

A great danger was thus avoided. Persecution had failed to arrest the movement. Corruption within, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, had been stamped out. Now the danger of division, and the setting up of rival schools of doctrine and practice, had been imminent. But God in His grace had sent up Paul by revelation to confer with those at Jerusalem; and the Holy Ghost, as they owned in the letter, had guided their deliberations. God again defeated the enemy, and the Church emerged safely out of this crisis. Nowhere but at Jerusalem could this question have been definitely settled. There, however, it was decided, and to that decision the leaders adhered, as James and all the Elders affirmed years after (Acts xxi. 25).

We have spoken of James. Who was he? The Apostle Paul in the Galatians tells us that he was the Lord's brother, and an Apostle likewise. "Other of the Apostles," he writes, "saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 19). Of the Apostles present at the conference that same Epistle mentions James, Cephas, and John (Gal. ii. 9); for we conclude that Paul is writing of the memorable occasion when with Barnabas he went up to Jerusalem, and was present at the council, as told us by Luke. Are there three Jameses of New Testament fame, or only two? Two only has Luke, we believe, distinguished—James the brother of John and James the son of Alphæus. The former killed by Herod, the historian subsequently tells us that Peter spoke of James (xii. 17) without further designation, as if there was but one then alive. In this passage (xv.), and also in xxi. 18, Luke mentions the same James. The question of only two or of three Jameses in the Apostolic company has been a matter of discussion for centuries. No one now can authoritatively settle it. We leave the matter, then, with this one remark, that if Luke was aware of three Jameses, and that James of Acts xii. 17, xv., xxi. 8 was not the son of Alphæus, but another of wholly different parentage, it is surprising he did not mention it.*

At Antioch.—Again at Antioch, the multitude was called together to hear the result of the visit to, and conference at, Jerusalem. The letter delivered was duly read, and joy filled their hearts. They rejoiced, we learn, for the consolation. And now, free doubtless in spirit, and with hearts prepared to receive, they could profit by the ministry of the two new-comers, Judas and Silas, who, being prophets, could and did exercise their gift in exhorting the brethren with many words, and in confirming them. Their mission ended, Judas returned to Jerusalem, Paul

* This remark is strengthened by the remembrance that in i. 13 Luke has mentioned by name only two Jameses. If subsequently he introduced a third, why did he not more definitely describe him?

and Barnabas continuing for a season at Antioch, preaching the word of the Lord with many others. We have mentioned Judas. What about Silas? The historian seems to intimate that he went back with Judas, for we read, "After *they* had tarried there a space, they were let go [or, dismissed] in peace from the brethren to those who sent them," as we should certainly read (Acts xv. 33). Silas must therefore have subsequently returned again to Antioch, for we find him there ready to accompany Paul when he commenced his second great missionary journey. We say "must have returned," for the words in ver. 34, "Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still," are generally rejected as not authentic.

A few remarks in conclusion. 1st, that for which Paul and Barnabas had contended was right, and those at Jerusalem endorsed it. To the Gospel, too, which Paul preached, they in conference could add nothing. It was in accord with that to which Peter, James, and John subscribed. Paul, who had learnt it directly from God, they owned had been taught correctly, because, as we can say, divinely taught. So the danger of two schools of doctrine amongst Christians, the one claiming the support of those at Jerusalem, the other pointing to Paul and Barnabas as their authority, was at this time averted. Apostles at Jerusalem there were. Apostles also at Antioch there were. But there was, there is, but one Holy Ghost. So what He had taught Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, He maintained and all accepted at Jerusalem.

2nd. Further, we see the place the Church had in all this. It was gathered together at Jerusalem to hear from Paul and Barnabas an account of the work among the heathen. It was consulted and had a voice in the selection of the messengers for Antioch. But at the conference only the Apostles and Elders are mentioned as present. And the letter went from these last, not from the assembly. The functions and the province of the assembly are thus

seen. It had not to decide questions of doctrine. It is taught, but never in Scripture teaches; yet had a voice in selecting the two who should bear the letter to Antioch.

3rd. Then we are reminded of the personal presence and acting of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Person dwelling on earth. What Peter had declared (Acts v. 32) of His presence, the letter affirmed, as it stated, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." His personal presence on earth was thus owned, and His active participation in the work distinctly declared. We shall learn more of this as we proceed.

XIII.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY. DIVINE GUIDANCE.

ACTS XV. 36—XVII. 14.

BRISKLY, we may well believe, the work went on at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas were labouring, teaching and preaching; but not alone, for many others also were now engaged in the work. A great centre this city had become. Labourers were abundant, and, what is more, the contention of Paul and Barnabas on behalf of converts from the Gentiles had been successfully sustained at Jerusalem, the Apostles and Elders in the metropolis of Judaism being of one accord with them, that Gentiles were not under the law, nor, when converted, were ever intended to be placed under it. The urgent need then once existing for their presence and labours in the ancient capital of the Seleucidæ had ceased, and the two missionary Apostles could contemplate a fresh journey to revisit the scenes of recent labour.

Peter's Visit.—But ere formulating plans for another tour, Peter's visit to Antioch, related only in Gal. ii. 11-21, we presume took place. Another crisis in the Church's history arose. Certain came from James whilst Peter was in the city, stirring up Judaising controversy afresh; not now insisting upon the converts from heathenism observing the law, but arousing those who had been Jews to keep apart socially from such, so as not to eat with them. How

busy was the enemy! How persistent in his efforts to divide the assembly in that city, and thus, of course, to bring discredit on the work! As a Jew Peter had rightly never kept company with any Gentiles (Acts x. 28). God, however, had taught him, on the housetop at Joppa, to call no man common or unclean. In conformity with that he was mixing socially at Antioch with the converts from the Gentiles, for all true believers were, and are, members of the one body of Christ, and so members one of another. The middle wall of partition has for all such been broken down, the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, having been annulled in the flesh of Christ.

Certain men, however—Paul does not call them brethren (Gal. ii. 12)—came from James, and, working upon Peter, made him separate socially from those formerly Gentiles. The old question was thus revived, but in a new dress. If Gentile converts could not be Judaised, those who had been Jews should certainly keep apart from them. Thus the middle wall would be in practice re-erected. Coming from James, and with Peter now gained over, victory seemed almost secured; for the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. This new turn in affairs was speciously arranged, and one can see how those not established in full Christian teaching might by it be carried away. For, granted that no word of God imposed the keeping of the law of Moses on the Gentiles, the word of God had distinctly imposed the law on the children of Israel. Must not, then, all such still keep it? If so, separation socially from other Christians must of necessity take place. The citadel of Christian truth, which Paul and Barnabas had successfully defended, seemed on the point of being unconditionally surrendered.

For Peter was ensnared. Barnabas too was led away. Fear of man, not conviction, was acting upon Peter. He, and the other Jews at Antioch, *dissembled*, writes Paul

(Gal. ii. 13). If Paul now gave way all would be lost. But he, formerly a Pharisee of Pharisees, and once so zealous for the law, kept his ground through grace, stepped into the breach and preserved the truth for the whole Church of God. He was, as it were, at this time the one strand of the rope which preserved the whole from breaking. He withstood Peter to the face. Peter's course was inconsistent with that which he held and had declared at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 16). It would make him, too, a transgressor through building again the things which he had destroyed. For why had he given up for a time social separation, if it was right to uphold it? Besides, his present conduct was really making Christ the minister of sin. He had left legal observances as a disciple of Christ to be justified by faith. If that was really wrong, in what a solemn light it placed the Lord Jesus Christ! (Gal. ii. 17, 18). These arguments we suppose were convincing, and had the effect of recovering Peter and Barnabas; so that Paul could take the latter into counsel about a second missionary journey, to revisit the places in which they had worked together. Into this episode in Paul's life Luke has not entered. We can understand that. His purpose was to trace out at this time the work among the Gentiles. That incident at Antioch, therefore, he passed over, as not bearing directly on his subject.

A Contention.—Agreement on the part of Barnabas to accompany Paul being readily given, a question arose as to the one who should accompany them. Barnabas desired Mark. Paul's judgment was against that, considering how he had left them during their first journey. Every one must feel that Paul had reason on his side. As neither would give way, and a sharp contention having arisen between them, they parted company, to work in different places. Barnabas with Mark revisited Cyprus, the scene of former labour; Paul, choosing Silas as his companion, took the field of Asia Minor, and went forth

with the commendation from the brethren at Antioch, and began by traversing Syria and Cilicia and confirming the churches.

Confirming.—A word on confirming disciples, in addition to that which has been said on p. 213 above. It followed of course on the profession of faith on the part of the converts, but was not a necessary prelude to their partaking of the Lord's Supper. The Apostles and others confirmed the *assemblies* (Acts xv. 41). Paul and Barnabas retracing on their first journey their steps and re-visiting the places in which they had worked, confirmed the disciples, —not some, but all! Had none at Antioch, Iconium, or Lystra remembered the Lord in death till those two revisited the cities named? Then Silas and Judas, when they went to Antioch with the letter from Jerusalem, confirmed the disciples there (xv. 32). Had none all these years met in Antioch to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread? Were Silas and Judas competent to do what Apostles as Paul and Barnabas could not? Again, in xviii. 23, Paul, we read, went through the countries of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening, or confirming (the same word here as elsewhere) *all* the disciples. *All* needed strengthening, or confirming. The context will show what the historian intended to state. The disciples as a company in the different places needed such a ministry. The Lord provided it, and others besides Apostles could do it.

Timothy.—"Through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches" intimates how the work in those provinces must have spread. *Churches* there were. Disciples were not confined to Antioch in the former province and to Tarsus in the latter. But Paul desired to press on. So he entered Lycaonia this time from the east, which brought him necessarily to Derbe by the Cilician Gates before reaching Lystra or Iconium. At Derbe the Apostle came on the track of his first journey, and was now reversing the order of his travels. Coming next to Lystra—for the

historian hastens on, and tells us this time nothing of any work at Derbe—Paul again meets with Timothy, a convert through his labours on the previous journey; now well reported of at Lystra and at Iconium, but evidently quite a young man, as the Apostle's remark to him years after (1 Tim. iv. 12) shows. Paul nevertheless was minded to take him for the work,—first circumcising him because of his parentage by his mother's side. Titus he would not allow to be circumcised. About Timothy's circumcision he was decided. All occasion against Paul by the Jews should be avoided. Through the cities they now went, carrying the decrees ordained at Jerusalem. To some of the cities, as Iconium, and probably Antioch, Timothy was no stranger, and he must have known disciples in them. Silas was a perfect stranger to them all; ranking, however, as we see in the Apostle's salutation to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1), before Timothy, and next after Paul.

Cheered indeed must have been the Apostle's heart amid all that he had to try him. The converts had evidently kept their ground. The "much tribulation" of which they had been warned, and which they had many of them witnessed meted out to Paul, and by this time had probably experienced in their own persons, had not quenched their ardour for the spread of the truth. The assemblies planted on the previous visit were assemblies still. And now enjoying fresh apostolic ministry, they were established or confirmed in the faith, and increased in number daily. We gather from this that a time of cessation from persecution was experienced, like that which the churches of Palestine had proved after the conversion of Paul (ix. 31). God does allow graciously a breathing time when the energy of persecutors has for a time expended itself, like a volcano which enters on a period of comparative inactivity after some great outburst from internal fires. So it seems to have been with the churches in Asia Minor at this time.

So far the Apostle had been re-visiting scenes of his

former labour. Now he would break new ground, turning northward to Phrygia and Galatia, through both of which provinces he went, having been forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia.* Divine guidance was markedly manifested on this journey. Here we first meet with it. Viewing the map, it will be seen that from Iconium and by Antioch a direct road led to Asia—*i.e.*, the Roman proconsular province of that name. Thither he would have gone, had not the Holy Ghost, who guides as to the fields of labour on earth, forbidden it. The time to work that field had not yet come. Other countries were first to receive his attention. Phrygia and Galatia were to profit by it, ere Asia heard the Gospel from his mouth. And profit they certainly did, if what we learn of the work in Galatia was at all indicative of what it was in Phrygia. Gladly did the people in the former province welcome the Apostle; "Ye received me," he writes, "as an angel of God,"—his infirmity, his trial in the flesh, in no way checking the readiness of the Galatians to receive his ministry. Nor did that readiness diminish as they made better acquaintance with him. "I bear you record," he could add, "that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (Gal. iv. 14, 15). We may suppose, from this, that he suffered in his eyesight as well as in other ways. The Galatians felt for him, they loved him warmly. But, evidently of a versatile disposition, they were subsequently much taken up with Judaising teachers, and Paul was then regarded by them in a very different light. Gauls they were, who had migrated to Asia Minor, and exhibited that characteristic which can be traced in the race to this day.

* It is questioned what the historian intended by Galatia here, whether the Roman province of that name, or what may be called Galatia proper. We have said, "having been forbidden," for this is what Luke wrote, assigning thereby this reason for turning to Phrygia and Galatia.

Troas.—Phrygia and Galatia traversed, but no details recorded connected with this visit, nor with the second referred to in xviii. 23, the historian hastens on to the moment when the call to enter Europe was made known. Coming over against Mysia, the Apostle had desired to enter Bithynia, the north-western province of Asia Minor. But, as with respect to Asia, so too with respect to Bithynia, Divine guidance forbad it. "The spirit of Jesus," as we should read, "suffered them not" (xvi. 7). But why these checks and diversions from the Apostle's purpose? Certainly the work in Galatia might have appeared a sufficient reason for not allowing him at that time to enter the Roman province of Asia. But why was the way to Bithynia barred when they were so near to it? This question remained unanswered till, passing by Mysia and coming down to Troas, Paul learnt by a vision at night, that to Europe they were to go. By prophetic announcements and by visions God was guiding His servant, and the company. Forbidden of the Holy Ghost to enter Asia, and again hindered from entering Bithynia, Paul by this vision was summoned to Macedonia.

Journeying across the Troad, as they needs must have done, they reached the town of Troas,* "the port for embarkation for any country to which the Holy Spirit might send them" (*Lewin*). Near to the site of ancient Troy, and now a ruin, it was then a place of importance, its walls embracing a circuit of several miles. Its harbour

* How they reached Troas, whether by skirting the southern boundary of Mysia, or whether they followed the road which ran through the middle of that province, and would land the travellers at Troas, is another point which is questioned. Mysia lay in the way, so part of it had to be traversed to reach the coast. If "passing by" be taken, as Mr. Lewin contends, in a metaphorical, not in a geographical sense, we shall understand that the Apostle passed along the direct road, without taking up any work in Mysia. Asia forbidden him at present, this seems the most natural understanding of the passage.

accommodation was good, though the port had been artificially constructed. From it and to it flowed much of the traffic which passed between the continents of Europe and Asia. But to Paul Troas was otherwise memorable, and never, surely, did it fade from his remembrance. For the vision that he had on his first visit, and the incident connected with Eutychus on his last visit before his imprisonment, were doubtless imperishably fixed on his mind. To us it has an additional interest, apart from classical associations, since it was the place where, according to our narrative, Luke first joined company with Paul. For the knowledge of this we are indebted, incidentally we may say, to the historian himself.

The Vision.—Alone with God, in the silent hours of the night, the Apostle received what we may call fresh marching orders; and the secret of his steps being diverted from entering Bithynia was now to be understood. "A vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (xvi. 9). Communicating to his companions what he had seen and heard, all agreed that it was a call from God to cross the sea to visit that country. For we read, "And after he had seen the vision, immediately *we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that God" (not "the Lord") "had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (ver. 10).

Companions in Travel.—Here for the first time does Luke write in the first person plural, associating himself with Paul as one of his companions—"*we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that God had called *us*," etc. In this unobtrusive way does he first present himself on the stage. Henceforth we can trace, by the pronouns used, when he was with Paul and when he was not. And now we have been introduced to the great Apostle's chief companions in labour one by one. Of Titus we have learnt that he was with Paul and Barnabas at

the conference at Jerusalem, Silas joined him as travelling companion at Antioch, Timothy at Lystra, we suppose, and now Luke at Troas. Of these Titus and Timothy were his children in the faith. As to the time and human instruments, if any, used for the awakening of Silas and of Luke, history is silent.

Philippi.—Setting sail from Troas, they made a straight course to the island of Samothracia, now Samothraki; and the next day they reached Neapolis, now Cavallo, to which they were bound. Leaving there the vessel, they set forth up the country by land to Philippi, distant some eight to ten miles. Now in ruins, it was then a town of importance as the first city of that district of Macedonia, taking that place as the capital of Macedonia *Prima*, which had once belonged to Amphipolis. Connected in profane history with the overthrow of Brutus and Cassius by Octavius and Antony, it became a Roman colony with the *Italicum jus*. This carried with it immunity from public taxes,* with municipal government. It was governed by Roman laws.

On the first Sabbath after their arrival the travellers sought out the place for prayer, there being no synagogue in the city; this indicating that the Jewish population was neither large nor wealthy. Resorting to the spot, near the river Gangites, now Angista, they found only women. Where were the men? Religion among the Jewish settlers seems to have been at a low ebb. Some faithful ones were, however, there. The women would attend at the place for prayer, if the men did not. Was the vision all a delusion, a snare? A man of Macedonia Paul had seen, who said, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Had men been crying to God in that country? Very likely it was the prayer of godly women which was to be answered by that vision and its consequences. Unbelief might have judged erroneously, and, seeing only women, might have thought there was little field for labour in that city. Paul

* As the land tax and the poll tax.

and his company, however, were not discouraged. "They sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither." And they spake, we can well believe, as freely and as earnestly as if a large number of men were collected with a proportionate number of women. And the women got a blessing. Thus the work began. Ere long the question, where were the men? received an answer, as many evidently were converted. A small beginning led to great blessing.

Lydia.—Of one woman we are now to read, Lydia her name, from the city of Thyatira, in the province of Lydia in Asia Minor. She "heard us," said Luke; and the Lord opened her heart to attend unto the things spoken by Paul. The change in her was real, and soon effected. And, baptised, she and her household, she offered hospitality to Paul and to his company. Engaged in business, a seller of purple, she was a woman of means. She would not be denied. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord," were her words, "come into my house, and abide there." She meant what she said. "She constrained us," writes Luke (xvi. 15). Her house became the sojourn-place of that little company of four, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke. There was now one Christian household at least in the city of Philippi.

Divine guidance was marked. A resting-place for those labourers was thus unexpectedly opened out. That day's converse with the women at the prayer-house outside the city was destined to produce many and important results. Blessing came to Lydia, a home was found ready for Paul, etc.; and encouragement surely they must all have felt. One step led to another. But they were content to take one step at a time. In the work of God how often may that be necessary. Of Divine guidance Lydia could also surely speak. A native of Thyatira, but resident at Philippi for the prosecution of her trade, she could now see God's hand in leading her to that city. She was brought thither to hear and to receive the Gospel, and to have the

honour of entertaining servants of Christ. The Apostle and his companions lived under her roof. How many, surely, reviewing their path can speak of the way God has led them. Far away was Lydia's native city. Led forth from it for secular work, she found that God's eye had been on her, and His hand had guided her, and now His voice she had heard in the depths of her soul, ministering salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

A Pythoness.—Happy seasons they must have enjoyed, the labourers partaking of Lydia's hospitality and imparting Christian instruction, whilst she and her household were drinking in apostolic teaching. Nor was the work confined to that household. Brethren are mentioned as converts ere Paul left the place (xvi. 40). Luke, however, does not dwell on the quiet hours and fruitful seasons, but proceeds to tell us of the opposition aroused, and of the prosecution which followed, directed against Paul and Silas, occasioned as it was by the deliverance of the Pythoness from the demon that enslaved her. A Pythoness she was called,* as having a spirit of divination, and was supposed to be possessed by Apollo. Evidently the work of the Lord was proceeding, and was pretty well noised abroad. For that damsel, under the influence of the demon, followed Paul and Silas day after day,—"many days," said Luke, —and publicly advertised them, crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto you (not us) the way of salvation" (Acts xvi. 17). Mark the language—*you*, not *us*. She did not include herself among those for whom salvation was in store. Rightly so; for it was the demon who spake through her, and there is

* "Python was the prophetic serpent at Delphi, the centre and focus of Gentile divination. He gave his name and place to the prophetic Deity of the Gentile world; the successor of the serpent at Delphi was the *Pythian* Phœbus, or Apollo. And from him all who claimed the powers of divination received their title, and were called Pythons."—*Bishop Wordsworth on Acts.*

no salvation for demons, and they know it (Matt. viii. 29). Two women are then specially noticed at Philippi,—Lydia, who opened her house to Paul, after the Lord had opened her heart; and the Pythoness, who opened her mouth to advertise the work.

We have said it was a demon which possessed her. Was that really the case? Proof was at hand for all who wanted it. Would Paul receive help in the work from such a quarter? The Lord would not when on earth (Luke iv. 35, 41). The servant would not either. So, grieved by her ways, Paul at length turned round, and exorcised the demon: "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her," he said. "And it came out the same hour" is the historian's account (xvi. 18). The damsel was delivered from the demon. The power of the name of Christ was manifested. A greater victory was achieved than that by Octavius and Antony over the forces of Brutus and Cassius. A poor wretched member of the human family was delivered from demoniacal possession. But the gain to her masters was gone. Selfish greed had actuated them—they were making money by her. Now, all hopes of further pecuniary profit thus ended, enmity against Paul and Silas possessed them. They laid hold of them. They dragged them into the market-place before the rulers, and forthwith brought them unto the magistrates. That it was possession was evident. The spirit left her. That it was a *demon* and not *divine* power all could see; for, commanded in the name of Jesus Christ, it at once obeyed and left its victim.

A Prosecution.—By Roman law the religion of a country was not to be interfered with. Now Paul and Silas were preaching Christ. An accusation, therefore, an indictment, was ready to hand. We learn what it was. "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans" (20, 21). Virtuous,

law-abiding people indeed! Worthy citizens of Philippi! In this character they now appeared. Now what had they cared about Roman law, or the preaching of Paul and Silas, so long as their pockets were not touched? But, their source of gain being dried up, they came out in this new guise. Satan can be transformed into an angel of light when it suits his purposes. The magistrates evidently had no sympathy with the accused. The prosecutors probably knew that. And those sitting in the seat of justice would show themselves zealous for the law. The accusation thus brought, without delay and apparently without further parley, the garments of the accused were forthwith rent by the magistrates and the beating with rods commenced. Many stripes laid on them, they were sent to prison, and the jailor was charged to keep them safely.

A Night in Prison.—Vengeance had been exacted. The majesty of the law had been upheld. The prison population was increased by two. Night then settled on the scene, and all was quiet, we may suppose, in the streets and in the market-place of Philippi. The jailor, to carry out his instructions, cast his two prisoners into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. He could then, like his superiors, the magistrates, retire to rest with an easy mind. His new prisoners, he was assured, when so confined, could not possibly escape during the hours of darkness. So he fell asleep. But two in that prison did not sleep. What kept them awake? Were they brooding over the gross injustice of which they had been the victims? Were the wounds caused by the scourging so painful that sleep was banished from their eyelids? They did not sleep for their hearts were full, and they gave vent to their feelings in a manner never before, we may be sure, known within those walls. Many, doutlbess, had been the curses uttered there by prisoners, impotent to do more than curse, or to breathe out imprecations on those

who had imprisoned them. But with Paul and Silas how different! For "at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God." Prayer might seem not out of season; but praises who would have expected? And evidently these latter were no feeble attempts to encourage each other, or to put a bold face on their misfortunes. For the prisoners heard them. Those, whose feet were fast in the stocks, and so unable to move, or perhaps even to shift their position, were the freest in spirit that night. Praises or hymns to God were heard by the other occupants of the jail, coming forth from those two in the inner prison. If nothing else prevented the other prisoners sleeping, the prayers uttered and the hymns sung by Paul and Silas must have done that, who with their wounds undressed, and painfully conscious of the treatment they had received, showed their spirits remained undaunted, and their hearts full of praise.

The Jailor.—What would come out of it? Why were they allowed to be thus ignominiously and unjustly treated? Had the Lord deserted them? The secret of it all is to be disclosed. The jailor was one of those given by the Father to the Son before the foundation of the world, and ere sunrise the next morning he was to profess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So at midnight God began to work. The place was shaken by an earthquake, all the prison doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. The jailor, suddenly awaking out of sleep, saw the doors open and feared that all his prisoners had escaped. He therefore drew his sword, not to smite a prisoner, but to kill himself. But again a voice is heard, *clear and loud*, from the inner prison. This time it is addressed to the prison keeper, and in the hearing of all: "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here" (ver. 28). That hard-hearted man's preserver was one of the two to whom he had shown no sympathy, and therefore deserved none at their hands.

Changed Circumstances.—Calling for a light, springing into the inner prison, and trembling for fear, he is

seen, where previously he had never thought of being, at the feet of Paul and Silas, whom he now brought out. Was it pity only that now took possession of him, or remorse for his treatment of them? There was more than that. Conscience-work had begun in his soul. He was now thoroughly aroused. He was sensible of a want, the urgency of which would brook no delay, nor permit him to conceal it. All might hear of it. In agony of soul, for the first time in earnest about his salvation, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" A moment of interest and joy to Paul and Silas. Nor to them only. Was there not joy in heaven as these words were uttered by the jailor on earth? (Luke xv. 7, 10).

Were the words of that possessed woman really true? Had she correctly described the vocation of those at whose feet he had fallen? He knew, if no one else in the prison did, that they were blessedly true. So, in deep anxiety, to them he turned, and inquired the way of salvation. His question put was at once answered. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (ver. 31). We quote the Revised Version, and give the better reading. Like the multitude in John vi. who asked, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?"—to whom the answer came, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 28, 29); so to his urgent question came the direct and simple answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." The jailor naturally was thinking of himself—What must *I* do? The answer intimated that God was willing to save him and all under his roof.

How real and important, aye and personal, a matter does salvation appear, when the conscience is aroused. No fine phrases, no vague generalities, will satisfy the person then. The one, the all-absorbing question is, "What must I do to be saved?" The thought expressed in that question implies, of course, ignorance of the way of salvation.

But how completely does the answer set the soul right in this matter, as it directs it away from itself to another: "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Why believe on Him? Because all has been done, all has been suffered by Him, that had to be done and suffered for salvation to be within our reach. Our sins have been borne by Him, and propitiation has been made by His blood. How perfect then and all-sufficient must be His atoning sacrifice, that to a heathen, to an idolater who had never till that moment bestowed one thought on his soul, salvation was then and there for him, and for every member of his house if they believed on the Lord Jesus. Paul and Silas did not, however, stop there, "for they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house" (ver. 32). Following in this the better reading "with" for "and to," it would appear that all his household were present with him. The message, the salvation, was for them all. Inside the prison, then, Paul and Silas repeated the offence for which they had been thrown into it. Would the jailor inform against them? would he denounce them? How could he? how should he? They had kept him from self-destruction, they had ministered the way of present salvation to that man and to his household.

Conversion.—These prisoners had shown of what spirit they were. They sang praises with their feet in the stocks. They had preserved the jailor, who had shown them no kindness, but the contrary, from the guilt of suicide. They set before him the grace and the freeness of salvation. Now we learn how grace wrought in him. He displayed fruits of the Divine nature. He showed that he was converted. Consideration for them was first manifested. He took them that same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. He confessed the Lord, was ranked as His disciple, in common with his household. For all of them were straightway baptised. He set meat before Paul and Silas, who doubtless were in need of it. Thought, love, concern for

these two he displayed,—fruit, surely, of that Divine nature of which he had just become a partaker; and now, his heart full, he rejoiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God. Well, how well could he now understand those two singing hymns to God at midnight, since he and they were partakers of the same grace and shared in the same joy.

The Morrow.—What a night had that been for those inside the prison! Morning came, and with it the *lictors*, the officers of the magistrates, who had inflicted the punishment the previous day. They came with a command from their superiors to let the prisoners go. In zeal for the law those magistrates had inflicted corporal punishment and imprisonment. Now they were to learn that *they* were the law-breakers, having beaten uncondemned two who had the right of Roman citizenship. Jealously was that right guarded by the Romans, and to act in contravention of it was no light matter for the offender. The magistrates had thereby laid themselves open to prosecution. At the mercy therefore of their victims, they now cringed before them, and, as Paul had insisted, came themselves in person, brought them out of the prison, and asked them to leave the city. This, after entering Lydia's house, seeing the brethren, and comforting them, they prepared to do.

A night memorable for all concerned it had indeed been. Did Lydia and those with her think that a blow had been struck at them all by the arrest, ill-treatment, and imprisonment of Paul and Silas? Very likely there was sadness in her house that livelong night. Well could she now understand that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm xxx. 5), as Paul and Silas recrossed her threshold, and announced the addition of another household to the newly formed Christian community. Divine guidance, all must have felt, had been again displayed. What seemed so detrimental to the cause had really furthered it. Completely was the enemy again outwitted. He sought to stop the work by the arrest and imprisonment

of the evangelists. That only furthered it, and increased the number of the disciples.

Thessalonica.—From the capital of Macedonia Prima, they went to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia Secunda, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and along the great Roman road, the Via Egnatia. The distance to be travelled was about one hundred Roman miles. There—what in Philippi was not—was a synagogue of the Jews. At Philippi we read not of Jews stirring up the multitude, such as Paul had experienced in Asia Minor. At Thessalonica, however, the Jews were again prominent, and foremost in the uproar. Leaving Luke at Philippi, Paul and Silas began work at Thessalonica, and first with the Jews. "For three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening," we are told, "and alleging, that the Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ" (Acts xvii. 2, 3). His heart's desire, and prayer for Israel, was that they might be saved (Rom. x. 1). In accordance with that he first laboured in the synagogue, and with great effect. "Some of the Jews were persuaded" (better here than "believed"), "and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks" (*i.e.*, proselytes), "a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." The work was extensive, and souls were in earnest. Of this we have confirmatory evidence from the Apostle Paul himself, who, writing to the Thessalonians, could say, "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13). So simple were they, so hearty, so real.

Opposition.—Jealousy aroused, unbelieving Jews worked on the rabble ("vile fellows," as the Revised Version translates), to make an uproar. The Jews, who would not eat with such, had no compunction in calling in their aid to arrest, if possible, the movement. In this they to a

certain extent succeeded, and sought for Paul and Silas in the house of Jason, but in vain. They could not find them. The Lord watched over His servants, and on this occasion sheltered them in some way not explained by the historian. The crowd however, intent on hostility to the Gospel, drew Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, there called *politarchs*, and accused Jason of harbouring Paul and Silas, and charged the others with him of disobeying the decrees of Cæsar, saying "that there is another king, one Jesus." Paul and Silas, in their eyes, turned the world upside down. What power their preaching must have had! Jason and others abetted them. The pestilential teaching must be stopped. It was even a menace to the authority and claims of Cæsar. How loyal to the Imperial dynasty could Jews become! At home, desirous to shake off the Roman yoke; abroad, when it suited their purpose, playing the *rôle* of doughty champions of it. These accusations, put forward, troubled the multitude and the rulers. The politarchs could not ignore them. But, more guarded in their conduct than those at Philippi, they took security of Jason and the others, and let them go. With this terminated the Apostle Paul's labours at that time at Thessalonica; for the brethren—what love was this!—fearing evidently the mob, who were ready to wreak their vengeance on Paul and Silas, sent them away by night to Beræa. How grace ministered attracts those who receive it, and calls forth the exhibition of Divine nature—love from those who have been blessed.

What length of stay Paul had made there it is difficult precisely to fix, but it must have been some little time. The first three Sabbath days were spent in the synagogue; after which they must have worked elsewhere, for we learn from the Epistle to the Philippians that the saints in that city sent once and again to minister to Paul's necessity when at Thessalonica. And since the distance between these cities was one hundred Roman miles, communication in

those days must have taken time, and weeks must have passed, most likely, between the first and the second remittance. Luke had been left at Philippi, and remained there, as the change of pronoun from the *first* person plural to the *third* now plainly indicates. We can understand then the readiness of the Philippian saints so early in their Christian career to minister to the Apostle's need. Luke's continued presence at Philippi would explain, too, the repetition of that service (Phil. iv. 16), and how it came about that the Philippian assembly was thus specially distinguished.

Further, in support of the opinion that the Apostle's stay was not limited to three weeks, we may mention, as we learn it from the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, that the report of their conversion had sounded forth throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. i. 8), and the saints had been instructed by Paul in person in Christian teaching, and notably in that of the Lord's coming (1 Thess. v. 1, 2; 2 Thess. ii. 5), though needing more, which the Apostle by his first letter supplied (1 Thess. iv. 15-18). Then, too, we are told how Paul's heart had been drawn out towards them (1 Thess. ii. 7, 11), even as a nurse cherisheth her children, and as a father cares for the behaviour of his family. Moreover he had maintained himself, while there, by working at his trade of tent-making (1 Thess. ii. 9). In addition to all this, we would remind the reader of those ties he formed, ties of which Paul's earnest desire to revisit them are evidences (1 Thess. ii. 17, 18; iii. 10). All these facts point to a stay in that city of some little duration, though suddenly cut short by the violence of the mob stirred up by the Jews. And much fruit had resulted. The work had been successful in a remarkable manner. The word had wrought effectively in many, and already (1 Thess. v. 12, 13) there had been raised up some who voluntarily cared for the saints, labouring among them, and who were over them in the Lord. A needful service this was, and one which

the unruliness of some (1 Thess. v. 14, 15) would cause to be increasingly valued. All this intimates that the visit there was of some length. But much as Paul might have liked to prolong it, other fields of labour had to be occupied, which the enemy, by driving them away from Thessalonica, set them free to enter upon.

Berœa.—"Ever onward" was the great Apostle's motto. So, carrying out the Lord's instructions, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye unto another" (Matt. x. 23), Paul and Silas departed to Berœa, now Verria, or Kara Verria. This was situated in another division of Macedonia —Macedonia Tertia—and so under different jurisdiction. Nothing daunted by past experiences, they sought out the Jews in that city, by entering into the synagogue. Here they had a more favourable reception from the frequenters of the synagogue, who, not indeed ready to receive the Word just on the authority of two strange men, searched the Scriptures daily, and proved that the new teaching was correct. Jealousy and clamour had been displayed at Thessalonica; a readiness to weigh matters, and fairness in listening, characterised those in Berœa. "They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The result we read: many of them believed. A great number, too, of Greek women of honourable estate, and of men not a few. Was Berœa to be a second Derbe, where they could labour in peace? Or, would it resemble more what had been experienced at Iconium and Lystra, to which places, as we have seen, Jews went from a distance to stir up opposition. Alas, it was to be like these two latter; for Jews from Thessalonica went to Berœa, about fifty miles distant, having heard that the Word of God was being preached there by Paul. What persistent hostility to God and to His grace! Allowed to stir up opposition and to trouble the people, the brethren in Berœa, so recently converted as they all were, cared for Paul, and sent him away as far

as the sea, and some even conducted him to Athens. What malice actuated those Jews! They would not receive the truth, and, if possible, would hinder anybody else from enjoying it. Children of the devil were thus manifested (John viii. 41-44; 1 John iii. 10). Is this an uncharitable statement? Scripture so characterises persistent opponents of the faith (Acts xiii. 10). Let us look at things in their true light.

"As far as to the sea" they went. So we should read according to the oldest uncials, and not "as if to the sea," which might be held to have been but a blind to put pursuers off the scent. At what point they embarked for Athens is not stated. A road from Berœa eastward toward the sea lay through Pydna, where it turned southward, then through Anamum and Hatera to Dium, where it has been suggested that they took ship for Athens. There was also another road to Dium according to the Antonine itinerary. As Luke, however, has not traced the route we cannot definitely fix the road to Dium, nor settle on that port as the place of embarkation. We can, however, pause to admire the devotedness of those brethren who escorted Paul, and did not leave him until he reached Athens. The sea voyage to Athens would occupy a little time, say from three to six days, according as the vessel went continuously, or stopped the nights by the way. So we may compute the journey from Berœa to Athens and back to have necessitated an absence from home of these brethren of between two and three weeks. But sure we are neither the time, the expense, nor the fatigue was grudged in caring for, and cheering, and helping on his way one who had ministered such blessings to their souls, and, it may be, whose weakness of sight made him more dependent on others. Brotherly love was active in them. They were manifestly children of God.

Paul must for a time be at Athens alone; Silas and Timotheus abode at Berœa still.

XIV.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED. IN ACHAIA.

CHAPS. XVII. 15—XVIII. 22.

INTO three of the four divisions into which Macedonia was at this time divided, Paul, Silas, and Timothy had penetrated; Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berœa had each in turn been blessed with the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. And as persecution arose in one place they moved on, and could do it the more readily, because the above-mentioned towns were situated in different divisions, and so under different governments, though all were subject to one central proconsular jurisdiction, the head-quarters of which for the whole of Macedonia was fixed at Thessalonica. Of three Roman proconsular provinces in these parts we have mention made in the New Testament, viz., Macedonia, Achaia, and Illyricum or Illyria. Of work in the first we have read. To apostolic labours in Achaia Luke by his history will now introduce us. Of work in Illyricum we have no specific record beyond the brief notice in Rom. xv. 19. But what a labourer was Paul! How true was it he did not seek to build on another man's foundation, but carried out as far as in him lay the words of Scripture, "To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand" (Rom. xv. 20, 21). "I laboured more abundantly than they all;" he had previously thus written of himself to the Corin-

thians (1 Cor. xv. 10). No Apostle was more active or made longer journeys than he did.

Of the band of four who had crossed from Troas to Neapolis, Luke had been left at Philippi, and Timothy had remained for a time at Thessalonica, when Paul and Silas left it by night for Berœa. Now Silas and Timothy, who had rejoined him, were left for a little at Berœa, and Paul went forth alone to break new ground. The Thessalonian saints had sent Paul and Silas away, thus caring for their safety. The Berœans did the same for Paul, against whom the fury of the mob in the city was really directed. But some of them, as we see, went with him all the way to Athens, manifesting in this marked way their true Christian love.

Athens.—To the centre of Greek intellectual culture the Apostle had now come. There philosophers congregated. In that city had been seen, each in their day, great philosophers, poets, orators, and statesmen of the old world. 'Tis true the golden age of Athens had passed, but philosophy was still cultivated. Epicureans and Stoics frequented the city, and came across the Apostle. He in their midst, the one champion of Christian teaching, the preacher of Divine grace, the leveller of all mere human pretensions, and the lifter up of the Crucified One as the only hope, refuge, and saviour for men,—he now perambulated the city, bereft of any Christian companions, entirely alone. What occupied his thoughts? What concerned him? Luke answers in part these questions. The Apostle himself supplies further information. His spirit was stirred, or provoked within him, as he saw that city given up to idolatry, or rather full of idols. The exercise of the human intellect, great as it had been in the past, had not lifted the people out of the folly, to say no more, of worshipping stocks and stones.

Looking round, he would see everywhere traces of man's degradation. In the city which could boast of a long roll

of names renowned in the heathen world the true God was by most unknown. Could the Gospel win trophies there? The task might well appal a stout heart; and the consideration of it might naturally preoccupy any one who surveyed it. As yet Paul was alone, for the message sent by the Berœan brethren for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him with all speed, had not, we may believe, had time to be delivered and acted upon. Other thoughts, however, had as well a place in his mind. He remembered the Thessalonian saints, so brightly and so recently converted. He thought of them. Very likely many there had known a comparatively smooth path till the Gospel reached them. How changed were their circumstances! Fierce persecution assailed them. They were in a position to them very new, though one with which Paul had been made familiar. He knew well how difficult it would be, nay, how impossible, unless sustained by Divine grace, for them to stand their ground. So he ardently desired news of their welfare. How could he get it? One way there was, and only one, viz., to send Timothy back there when he should have rejoined Paul. And much as he would have valued the presence and countenance of that young disciple, he was willing to be left in Athens alone, that Timothy might revisit Thessalonica, there confirm the faith of the suffering saints, and then rejoin Paul with word of their welfare. But this could not be done in a day or in a week. Paul therefore thought it good, he writes, to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith (1 Thess. iii. 1, 2). What love in Paul's heart! What earnest desire for their welfare! What he had been, when there, like a nurse and like a father (1 Thess. ii. 7, 11), that he was still. With feelings thus mixed, on the one hand stirred within him at the idolatry rife around, on the other earnestly solicitous for steadfastness in the Thessalonians, he began to work alone, and held intercourse with people in the public place of resort, the market-place,

speaking with any that met with him. He had a word for any and every one, whether Jew or Greek; a gospel, glad tidings indeed, for all who would receive it; even salvation through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the Areopagus.—With Jews and devout persons, *i.e.*, proselytes, he discoursed in the synagogue. With others he spoke in the market-place. And now of an address given on the Areopagus at the request of certain philosophers we are to be pretty fully informed. Epicureans and Stoics who had met with him desired to hear more particularly what he had to say. The market-place probably could not afford that quiet to listen to him which his questioners desired. Evidently he had something to communicate, something strange, something new. It was the latest importation into Athens. What was it? What the value of it? What the purport of it? Ready certainly Paul had shown himself to converse with his neighbours, and anxious evidently to impart to them something which so deeply interested him. What was it all about? A babbler some thought him. A setter forth of strange gods others described him. He should speak for himself and expound his doctrine, that philosophers, men of cultivated minds, and men of intellect might sit in judgment on it, and decide on its worth or worthlessness. This doubtless the philosophers purposed. So to the Areopagus they took him, and there heard what must have been new, and of vital importance to every one of them.

Never before had a Christian such an audience, and such an opportunity. He was to speak on that hill where the supreme court of Athens held its sittings. He was to speak to a company composed of philosophers of the heathen world. He had a subject on which he could speak, and a text which he could urge with great weight. His subject was the inscription he had seen on an altar, viz., "To an unknown God"; his text was a quotation from Aratus,*

* Aratus flourished B.C. 270.

a Cilician poet, but found also, though not quite in the same words, in a hymn to Jupiter by Cleanthes,* who, born at Assos in Asia Minor B.C. 300, died about B.C. 220.

"An Unknown God." This the Athenians admitted, and thereby confessed that, with all their philosophy and intellectual studies, there was One of whom they were ignorant—this Unknown God.† To make Him known could be no crime, nor an idle occupation. Paul then would make Him known. He is the God of creation, all around and above being His handiwork. In temples made with hands therefore He does not dwell, nor has He need of anything at the hands of His creatures, seeing that He giveth to them life, and breath, and all things. Who He *is*, and what He *gives*, stated, next follows what He has *done*. He has made of one‡ all nations upon the face of the earth, having also determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation. Then is stated what He *desires*, viz., that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Now this, which of his hearers would gainsay, for had not Aratus sung, as he now reminds the philosophers, "We are also His offspring"? An *unknown* God near them! True indeed are the words of Zophar the Naamathite, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job xi. 7). The philosophers had not discovered Him, the Athenians were ignorant about Him.

The subject thus opened out, Paul now preaches from his text. If we are the offspring of God, as the Athenians boasted, idol-worship must be wrong. The Deity could not

* Cleanthes, though the author of some fifty works, produced very little that was original.

† It is said that owing to some plague, the cause for which was unknown, but supposed to proceed from some god, that altar had been erected.

‡ Blood should be omitted.

be like an image of stone, or wood, or metal. If men are the offspring of God, God cannot be like a lifeless idol. Plain indeed was this deduction. No one could refute it. A death-blow it dealt to idolatry. In this way the Apostle worked that day. The premises granted, the conclusion was irresistible. But how skilful and powerful, because divinely led, did Paul show himself to be. The altar "*To an Unknown God*" furnished him with his subject, and he used it effectively. The Creator of all things, the Lord of earth and heaven, dwells not in temples of human workmanship, nor needs either help or sustenance from the creature. Then as regards objects of worship, the words of Aratus, confirmed by Cleanthes, and endorsed by Paul's audience, showed the utter senselessness of bowing to stocks and stones as the likeness of God.

These points established, the altar and the poet pressed into his service, he went on to speak to the consciences of his hearers. God, whom he declared to them that day, had a message for each one of the audience. And Paul was there to deliver it. God, the to them Unknown God, was calling on men everywhere to repent. And this it was imperative on all men to obey, if they would escape His wrath, seeing that "He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (xvii. 22-31). The babbler, as some thought Paul, was the messenger of the God of heaven. The setter forth, as others viewed him, of strange gods, was commissioned to teach them about the *Unknown God*, whom they had for long ignorantly worshipped. Which of the philosophers, who had passed by that altar, ever expected to have a message directly concerning himself sent from that Unknown God?

What language was heard that day on the Areopagus! What a contrast to that which had often been there

listened to, and to that which generally took place! Sentences of death had commonly been there pronounced, and at times not always in righteousness. Here was an announcement of coming judgment, which concerned all the audience, and judgment in righteousness too, which must issue in final condemnation, unless averted by repentance. Then the earnest pleader, so different from those who had stood there before him, was not pleading for his life, nor petitioning for a favourable sentence from his judges. He was there to plead with all his audience that they should flee from the wrath to come. Would any ask, with what result? As for the philosophers, some mocked; others promised to hear him again. In these dispositions of mind he left them. He had given his message. He was clear of their blood. Nevertheless his visit to Athens was not without some fruit. For "certain men clave unto him, and believed, among the which was Dionysius an Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (xvii. 34). The interview with the philosophers on the Areopagus had not ended to the damage of Christianity. Some might scoff. But scoffing was not argument. Others might promise a further hearing. That showed their inability then and there to refute what had been advanced. But all of them, in a coming day, will acknowledge the importance of the Word.

Corinth.—From Athens Paul proceeded to Corinth, the then capital of Achaia. He left what had been the great seat of learning to work in the centre of licentiousness; for if Athens was famed for its philosophers, etc., Corinth bore an unenviable reputation for immorality, in connection especially with the temple of Venus. Here he first met with Aquila and Priscilla, who had recently left Italy because that Claudius Cæsar had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. This godly couple now became acquainted with Paul, and commenced a friendship which lasted for life. Their being of the same trade—tent-makers

—may have first drawn them together. The friendship, however, now formed was enduring; and when Paul left Corinth, and touched, upon his way to Judæa, at Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him thus far, and there remained for a time (1 Cor. xvi. 19). Aquila being a native of Pontus, Asia Minor was his country. We never read of his presence in Judæa. These two were zealous labourers in the Lord's work. Apollos owed much to them, and Christians in towns where they resided were indebted to them for a place in which to meet to show the Lord's death. Acts xviii. 26 tells us of the help they were to Apollos. 1 Cor. xvi. 19, Rom. xvi. 3-5 acquaint us with their service to Christians by an assembly meeting in their house, as well as their service to Paul in laying down their own necks for his life, a service to be thankfully remembered by all the assemblies of the Gentiles. To the last Paul had them in remembrance (2 Tim. iv. 19).

As at Athens, so at Corinth, as we have said, the Apostle had to commence the work alone. Activity indeed characterised him. So without either Silas or Timothy, he began to labour in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading both Jews and Greeks. Rejoined by these two, he was constrained, we read, by the word (not, as in the Authorised Version, "in spirit"), testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. The everlasting welfare of his countrymen he ardently desired. Definite results now followed. The Jews opposed and rejected the Word. Paul, then, repudiating all further responsibility regarding them, shaking out his raiment,—an act illustrative of his determination,—left them with the solemn words, "Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts xviii. 6). Leaving the synagogue, he taught in the house of one Titus (or, Titius) Justus, contiguous to it. This man was a proselyte, for he worshipped God, and doubtless was favourable to Christianity, so had the honour of providing a suitable meeting-room in which

the Apostle could teach and preach. The Lord thus watched over the Gospel.

Progress.—Despite the undisguised hostility of the Jews the work spread, and for a time they could take no public steps to prevent it. Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house. Many of the Corinthians, too, received the Word, and by baptism openly professed themselves to be disciples of Christ. The word told. Consciences were reached. Public profession was made. Now had we only Luke's account we should never have known what exercises of heart Paul at this time passed through. He evidently felt it was no light service to labour in Corinth; and the First Epistle to the Corinthians acquaints us with the spirit in which he began in that city. Does not this remind us of the mistake that may be made in jumping to conclusions on matters about which we have not full information? Who would have thought, when reading of the victorious progress of the work at Corinth as given by Luke,—who, we say, would have supposed from that account, what exercises of heart the Apostle was passing through?

On this his first visit he had determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2). Natural gifts they valued—as excellency of speech and of wisdom. Of the first he was destitute. His speech was contemptible (or, of no account, 2 Cor. x. 10). To the second he would not resort. "The Jews," he writes, "require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles" (not, Greeks), "foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 22-24). Enticing words of man's wisdom he set aside, desirous that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. True workman he was, and solid building was that which he valued. And, knowing what

they were naturally, he was with them in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling (1 Cor. ii. 1-5). From the Acts who would have gathered all this? Again, so careful was he that his ministry should not be blamed, that save Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas he baptised none, lest any should say that he had baptised unto his own name (1 Cor. i. 14). Nor would he take the smallest thing from them towards his support while labouring in their midst. From Macedonia he received help and needed help, but none from the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 9). The wants which his profits at tent-making could not meet, free-hearted contributions from the Macedonian saints supplied. Was this caprice on his part? No. For whilst working in this spirit the Lord's approval was communicated to His servant in a vision at night. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9). The servant was in his right place. He was the instrument whom the Lord would there use. The Shepherd knew where Paul was, the circumstances which surrounded him, and the encouragement which he needed, and provided this last. The Shepherd knew, too, the sheep that he had in that licentious city, given to Him of His Father. His eye was on them, and their everlasting welfare He would ensure. For that Paul had been guided to the city, and he should have the honour, the privilege, by his labours of making them manifest.

Chronology.—At Corinth nobody did set on Paul to hurt him. His experiences at Lystra, Philippi, and Thessalonica were not at this time repeated. Opposition, however, was organised, and an appeal to the newly-arrived proconsul the Jews were determined to make. The new proconsul, we say, for Gallio had just come to take charge of the province of Achaia. Here, then, we get another note of time. We have seen that the famine predicted by Agabus, and the awful end of Herod Agrippa I., had

thrown light on the period that had elapsed between the Crucifixion, Ascension, and Pentecost, and that visit of Paul and Barnabas with supplies from the brethren at Antioch to their brethren in Judæa. We can now estimate the length of time that elapsed between that visit and the attempted prosecution of Paul at Corinth before the proconsul's tribunal. In the thirteenth year of the reign of Claudius Cæsar, A.D. 53, Gallio arrived at Corinth as the new proconsul. In the fourth year of Claudius Cæsar, Herod Agrippa died, A.D. 44. Nine years, then, had passed during which we have had recounted the first missionary journey, and the second so far as it conducts us to the Apostle at Corinth and the prosecution attempted there. But as he had been labouring in that city for eighteen months previously, we must fix Paul's arrival at Corinth at about the beginning of A.D. 52, at which time the edict banishing Jews from Rome was issued, which sent Aquila and Priscilla to Corinth. As little did Claudius know what he was doing by that decree for Paul and the Church of God, as did Augustus what he was doing for the fulfilment of the word of prophecy, when he issued his decree for that enrolment which took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ.

Gallio.—To return. Marcus Annæus Novatus having been adopted by Lucius Junius Gallio, was called Junius Annæus Gallio, and is the man of whom Luke now writes. He was the brother of Seneca the philosopher. This most amiable man—if his brother Seneca rightly described him—and one of easy temper, now occupied the place of authority as proconsul. To him the Jews brought their complaint, expecting, doubtless, a willing ear. Their plot, however, completely failed. Gallio refused to take cognisance of their charges. Questions of Jewish law did not come within the sphere of his judicial powers. Any matter of wrong, or wicked villainy, he would, as he said, have listened to. Questions of their law, and disputes about

words and names, he was not sent by the emperor to sit in judgment upon. So he drove them from the judgment-seat. Attempting further to compel him to listen for fear of a tumult being raised, the beating of Sosthenes being evidence of the strong feeling that had been aroused,* Gallio, a man of imperturbable temper, was proof against any such demonstration. He refused to interfere. He cared for none of those things.

Tactics.—What efforts were made to stop the work! Unwearied was the enemy, and versatile were his attacks. On the first missionary journey tumults were raised at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, and at the last Paul's life was attempted by stoning. On the second tour different tactics were employed. Perhaps in Europe the way of hindering in Asia would not have succeeded. So the ruling powers were invoked at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, and legal processes were resorted to. At the first-named the charge preferred was one of having broken the Roman law by the unauthorised introduction of a new object of worship. At Thessalonica the accusation assumed the form of treason against Cæsar. The most turbulent people—the Jews—professed thus great concern for the Imperial honour and authority. What a farce! At Corinth new ground was chosen. Paul was a breaker of the Jewish law, teaching something contrary to the Mosaic law. But none of these attempts, based though they were on apparently legal grounds, were successful in stemming the movement. It went on in spite of each and all; and Gallio

* It is a question who beat Sosthenes,—the Greeks, as D, E, H, L, P, state, supported by the Syriac versions; or the Jews. The oldest MSS., A, B, with the Codex Sinaiticus, supported by the Vulgate, *omit* "the Greeks." With that omission accepted, the passage seems rather to refer to the Jews as those last named. Probably Sosthenes was inclined to Christianity already, or perhaps had declined to support the prosecution attempted by others, and hence the displeasure of his countrymen. Opinions on this matter are much divided.

having refused to entertain the charge made by the Jews, Paul was at liberty to continue his labours, which he did for a time, and then departed in peace on his way to Jerusalem, accompanied, as far as Asia, by Aquila and Priscilla.

To Syria.—Paul, we read, having tarried after this yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, having shorn his head at Cenchrea: for he had a vow (xviii. 18). To whom the last remark refers has been much questioned. We believe Luke referred to Paul. We know no reason why he should not have made a vow, ignorant as we are under what circumstances it was made; though Rom. xvi. 1, 2 may afford a little light on the matter, from the way the Apostle there writes of Phœbe, a deaconess of the assembly at Cenchrea, who carried subsequently the apostolic letter to Rome. "A succourer of many, and of myself also," he says. It may well have been that, overtaken with some illness, he had been indebted to the ministrations of Phœbe, and in gratitude to God for his recovery had made a vow. Putting Acts xviii. 18 and Rom. xvi. 2 together, the latter suggests a possible explanation of the former.

Reaching Ephesus, he left Aquila and Priscilla there, he himself entering into the synagogue and reasoning with the Jews. Allowed now of God to visit that city, his reception by his countrymen was encouraging, since they asked him to abide for a little time. Desirous, however, to visit Jerusalem, he consented not to their expressed wish, but promised to return to them if God permitted. The historian's real account of his answer is much shorter than that commonly ascribed to him, so we reproduce it, quoting the Revised Version: "And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; but taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you, if God will, he set sail from Ephesus" (Acts xviii. 20, 21). Ending his voyage at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the Church,

and went down to Antioch. Thus came to a conclusion his second great missionary journey.

What an interesting tour it must have been. Not only in Asia Minor had he preached—breaking up, too, entirely new ground—but to Europe the work had extended, and in the capital cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth he had planted the standard of the cross. How true is the description he gives of himself a few years later, when writing to the Corinthians: "Thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing: to the one a savour from death unto death; to the other a savour from life unto life" (2 Cor. ii. 14-16). What a description of his apostolic service! Truly the word was not spoken in vain.

Divine Guidance.—We have headed this journey *Divine guidance.* This was a special feature of it. Human wisdom did not direct the Apostle. In traversing, as we have seen, Asia Minor, he had desired to enter the province of proconsular Asia, but the Holy Ghost forbade it. Seeking to turn aside northward to Bithynia, the spirit of Jesus barred the way thither. Neither to the right hand nor to the left could they turn, so they journeyed on to Troas; for it was God's purpose that in Europe, not in Asia, Paul and his company should at that time find their proper sphere of service. The plan of the work and the development of it were both of the Holy Ghost. And, when they had reached Troas, Paul understood the reason and the wisdom of his being diverted from his purpose. The time had arrived to carry the gospel into Greece, so a vision appeared of a Macedonian entreating Paul to help them.

Reaching Philippi, there was work to be done in the prison. But for that Paul and Silas must be imprisoned.

In a way surely never expected, the Lord worked in that capital of a district. Then at Corinth, the capital of Achaia, meeting at first with comparatively little success combined with determined Jewish resistance, was he in his right place? The Lord Jesus by the vision at night comforted him, and acquainted him with His purpose of grace toward souls in that licentious city. Thus again Divinely guided, the Apostles remained, and met with great success. Human wisdom, it was plain, had in all this no place. How needful then is Divine direction, and the Holy Spirit's superintendence, when even an Apostle could be at fault as to the field of operation to be occupied.

Another feature in connection with this journey is the character of the only address during it of which Luke has given us an account—an address which he did not hear. For a purely evangelistic discourse by the great Apostle of the Gentiles we should turn to Acts xiii. For his manner of reasoning with ignorant heathen we should read his few words spoken on the spur of the moment at Lystra. At Athens and on the Areopagus how different is the tenor of his discourse! On this occasion he is more on his defence; but availing himself of the inscription on the altar that he had met with, he introduced to them the *Unknown God*, and demonstrated the insensate folly of the most intellectual of mankind. If the Greeks called themselves the "offspring of God," how could they worship stocks and stones as their gods? The boast of their poets Aratus and Cleanthes demonstrated the folly of their practice. If human wisdom could be at fault as regards the work of the Lord, it was indeed a blind guide to lead its possessors into the knowledge of God. The tenor then of this discourse is in perfect harmony with the special characteristic of this journey, and explains why it has been preserved in the pages of inspiration. Idolaters were being guided to see the folly of their ways, and to learn who was the God hitherto unknown to them.

Evidently God was working, and the Holy Spirit, the Divine Person dwelling on earth, was directing. Peter had been led, contrary to his preconceived ideas, to enter the house of Cornelius, for the time had come for Gentiles to share in the blessing. And Paul had been led against his purpose to cross over into Europe, for the time had come for Greece to be evangelised. The time and the field for service are ordered by God. The Holy Ghost directed then, and directs still. Would that this were more remembered, and room given for Him to lead in the work.

Luke's Accuracy.—An infallible guide there is in the Church of God, but not a human one. That should give confidence as to the carrying on of the work, despite the hindrances from the enemy and the failures of the servants. And now one would call attention, ere closing our remarks on this second journey, to the accuracy of the historian, as shown in the way he mentions the authorities in different cities. We have seen how accurate he was in describing Sergius Paulus as the proconsul of Cyprus (p. 187). He is equally accurate in terming the magistrates at Philippi *prætors* and their officers *lictors* (xvi. 20, 35). When writing of the authorities at Thessalonica, he terms them *politarchs* (xvii. 6). And later, as we shall see, speaking of certain authorities at Ephesus, he styles them *Asiarchs* (xix. 31). All these were the local authorities in the different cities, the Roman governor, or proconsul, being over them as ruling in each province. Luke then, by giving each its correct title in these different cities, shows that he knew well what he was about, and this mark of accuracy should increase confidence in him as a faithful historian.

The Written Word increasing.—That missionary journey so fruitful in blessing has an additional interest for us. It occasioned the first addition to the written revelation of God which bears the name of the Apostle Paul. He had evangelised, as we have seen at Thessalonica, and his heart, we learned from himself, was much bound up

with the converts there. And when hindered from revisiting them as he had wished, and that more than once (1 Thess ii. 17, 18), for Satan, in some way not explained, prevented it, he had sent Timothy to see after their welfare, whilst he himself remained alone at Athens. Hearing from Timothy on his return of their steadfastness in the faith, despite all their persecution, he dictated his first letter to them, which was shortly followed by the second. From this time the Apostle contributed, under the guidance of the Spirit, to enlarge the collection of New Testament writings, then in its infancy, with Epistles bearing his name, addressed to local Churches, as those to the Thessalonians, or to several assemblies in a region, as that to the Galatians, as well as some addressed to individuals. Thirteen Epistles in all are generally ascribed to him, of which twelve bear his name. To this subject we shall refer again, only remarking here that Paul dictated rather than wrote the most of them. Writing with him, for some cause, whether from impaired eyesight or what, was a difficult matter (Gal. vi. 11, Revised Version). Employing an amanuensis, he, however, authenticated each one, to prevent any mistake as to those which were his, by a salutation,—written, we suppose, always by himself. "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18). Now this, whether in the shortest form, as in Heb. xiii. 25, or in the longest (2 Cor. xiii. 14) is found at the close of all Pauline Epistles, but in none other. And not till Paul had passed away for some years did any other New Testament writer adopt anything like it. Then John, in closing the Revelation (xxii. 21), used very similar language.

A Characteristic.—A great extent of country had now been evangelised, and flourishing assemblies had sprung up in towns and in districts. But where are they? How many cities in which Paul laboured are in ruins, or if not that,

the work which had been carried on has died away! Antioch in Syria, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in Asia Minor; Philippi, Thessalonica, Beræa, Athens, and Corinth in Europe; in these had he preached, and fruits of his labours in all were found. What can we say of them now? Antioch in Syria still survives, but no Christian Church, it is said, exists within its walls. Antioch in Pisidia, with Lystra and Derbe, are in ruins. Iconium still remains, a town of some importance. Of the cities in Macedonia and Greece above mentioned Philippi is in ruins; of Corinth its glory has departed; Beræa, Athens, Thessalonica still remain. Then too the city of special prominence in the Apostle's third journey—Ephesus—is marked only by its ruins. A melancholy thought this gives us; yet, on the other hand, it is quite in keeping with the characteristic of the Christian Church, which is heavenly, and has not its permanent home on earth. In this it differs from Judaism. In the latter, one house—the Temple—and one altar are constituent elements connected with that worship, and both of them must be on earth. But we are to worship God in spirit and in truth, and should worship by the Spirit of God (John iv. 24; Phil. iii. 3). Cities therefore may fall into decay and ruin, and ecclesiastical buildings be destroyed, yet the Church of God abides, and true acceptable worship can be rendered independent of localities, or of material buildings. The Divine infallible Guide too, who was on earth in the Church at its beginning, is with her still (John xiv. 16). Human infallible guides were not in apostolic days, nor are there any such now. Only one infallible Guide, and that one Divine, there ever was since Pentecost, and He is here still. With Him, we have the Word of God as well, a guide in the confusion around, and the storehouse of instruction in the things of God. To this last let us cleave. And in proportion as the Holy Ghost's presence is owned, and His guidance sought, light will be cast on the written Word, and rich blessing will result.

XV.

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—DIVINE POWER.

ACTS XVIII. 23—XIX. 41.

"IN labours more abundant, in prisons more frequent, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft" (2 Cor. xi. 23). Such is part of the description the Apostle gave to the Corinthians, when on this third missionary journey, of his activity in service up to the date of that Epistle, as well as of his sufferings for Christ's sake. Never resting satisfied with his labours, he knew no lengthened cessation from toil till his imprisonment by the Roman authorities. Then, after reaching Rome, journeying with him ceased, but to be entered on again as soon as he was released (Heb. xiii. 23). His labours, we may say, only terminated with his death.

A Fresh Start.—He had reached Antioch for the fourth, and, as it turned out, the last time before his long imprisonment. Remaining there some time, he moved forward again, and went over Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples (Acts xviii. 23). On the first occasion of his labours in those parts he visited Phrygia before Galatia (xvi. 6). On this he reversed his movements, going through Galatia before Phrygia, apparently shaping his course for Ephesus, which he had promised to visit (xviii. 21). But having evangelised in both these provinces on his previous journey, he was desirous of first revisiting those scenes of labour, and of strengthening all the disciples. So he went through them in order. As yet the Galatians had

not been led away by Judaising teachers, though soon after he left them this time that trouble must have developed, which called forth his earnest appeal in the circular Epistle to the Churches of that province.

Ministry to Saints.—As yet, however, strengthening the disciples was the ministry needed. Details of this, and of this part of his journey, are wanting. One thing, however, is abundantly clear. We have remarked on it previously (p. 212). The Apostle was not content with having evangelised a country or a town, and of having been the means of numerous conversions. Building up and strengthening was required. He would devote himself also to that, for Paul was a teacher as well as an evangelist. Turning attention now for a moment to Luke, lack of detail in ministry at this time is quite in keeping with that historian's practice. For when Paul and Barnabas, on a previous journey, entered on the service of building up the saints at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, the historian, whilst just mentioning it, to intimate the character of their ministry, gives us no details about it. Are we, then, left in the dark on this matter? By no means. The Pauline Epistles supply information as to apostolic teaching. So with some, if not most of them, in existence before the Acts was written, there was the less need for Luke to enter on this subject.

Of these Epistles *six* certainly were in existence, for they were written before the Apostle's first imprisonment. And it may be that *four more* were in circulation before the Acts saw the light; though of this we cannot be confident. The six referred to are the two to the Thessalonians, the two to the Corinthians, that to the Galatians, and the one to the Romans. How Paul could comfort saints in trial, and in the prospect of the rapture, and of the Lord's subsequent personal coming to earth, when the day of the Lord will begin, the two first-named teach us. Then of his manner of correcting abuses and mistakes in

doctrine, coupled with a tenderness of heart for saints amongst whom he had worked, the two to the Corinthians are good examples. Further, his uncompromising opposition to Judaising teaching, which sought to put converts from the Gentiles under the law, is set forth in the Epistle to the Galatians. Whilst, for a systematic unfolding of the Gospel, as needed by Christians, the Epistle to the Romans stands out as second to none. All these written before his imprisonment, there came from his prison at Rome four more, especially ministering Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians treats of God's counsels in connection with Him, so Church teaching markedly appears in it; whilst that to the Colossians, its complement, treats of the *fulness* that there is in the Head, even Christ, above and beyond whom there is nothing, and can be nothing, for the saint. Heathen philosophy cannot vie with this, for the height to which it can take believers (Col. ii. 8-10); Jewish teaching cannot equal it (Col. ii. 16, 17). *Riches* of grace we read of in Ephesians; of the *fulness* that there is in Christ in Colossians Then Philippians ministers Christ for the walk here: who is the example (Phil. ii.), the object (iii.), and the One to rejoice in (iv.). And that to the Hebrews treats of His person, divine and human (i., ii.); shows, too, how He surpasses Moses and Aaron, and tells of His present service as High Priest—God's provision for Christians in the wilderness,—as well as of His service as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, in making propitiation for the sins of the people. The former service is being carried on; the latter is finished; and in token of that He has sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. x. 12).

Apollos.—A new worker now appears on the scene, another Hellenistic Jew—Apollos, or Apollonius, a native of Alexandria, who at this time visited Ephesus. A learned or eloquent man as he is described, he was also mighty in the Scriptures. With power of expression, and with plenty to say in connection with the written Word, he soon made all

in the synagogue conscious that he was no ordinary teacher, nor one who would take a backward place. "Instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of Jesus (as we should read here), knowing only the baptism of John" (Acts xviii. 25). He taught what he knew, but in full Christian teaching he was as yet deficient. "The things of Jesus" betrays that—"knowing only the baptism of John" confirms it. In the synagogue he spake boldly. Mighty in the Scriptures, eloquent in speech, fervent in spirit, a diligent labourer, what a valuable helper he might become! Priscilla and Aquila perceived this as they heard him, and seeking him out, took him home and there expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Priscilla and Aquila, we have said, following here the better reading. Very probably the wife was more apt at imparting knowledge than her husband. In the privacy of home those two could thus serve, communicating truth once unknown to themselves, but which they had surely learnt from intercourse with Paul. So, though Paul and Apollos had not yet met, nor did for some time, Aquila and his wife, having profited from their intercourse with Paul at Corinth, were able to help Apollos, which they did. What links are there in different chains! Apollos was to become a most useful helper in the Lord's work. For that, however, he needed teaching. Drawn to Ephesus, he met with those who could instruct him. And these had been driven out from Rome, and drawn to Corinth, that in the providence of God they might first meet with the great Apostle and learn for themselves. Instructed in Christian truth, and always ready to help as they could, the appearance of Apollos in the synagogue at Ephesus pointed out fresh service ready to their hand. They responded to the call, and taught him as probably none others then in Ephesus could have done; so that he, so highly gifted in grasping truth and in expressing himself, could become a most valuable worker

amongst the saints. A worker amongst the saints we have called him, who was also a bold champion of the faith, for in that service he evidently shone at Corinth (Acts xviii. 27).

To Corinth Apollos went with a letter of commendation from the brethren at Ephesus. As at the capital of proconsular Asia, so in that of Achaia, he laboured amongst his countrymen, mightily convincing "the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." A new instrument to further the work of God had then appeared in that city. His manner of working was quite in harmony with that of the Apostle. To the Scriptures he turned—to them he appealed; and his countrymen, however unwilling to yield, must have felt that the weapon he used with such effect was that revelation, on the possession of which they were so ready to pride themselves. "A guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes" (Rom. ii. 19, 20), it was thus they regarded themselves, as having, what others had not, a Divine revelation. Now, from the storehouse of that written Word Apollos drew the weapons with which he refuted the Jews, and left them without an answer.

But another circle of interest there was, and he did not neglect that in his zeal to refute his countrymen. Brethren there were, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. These he helped much (Acts xviii. 27). And Paul, writing afterwards to the Corinthians, reminded them of that eloquent and earnest man's ministry, saying, "I have planted, Apollos watered" (1 Cor. iii. 6). Leaving Greece he and Paul met for the first time at Ephesus, and then became personally acquainted. Personal intercourse with the former did not diminish the value that Paul had formed of that servant of Christ; and he showed that, when he wished Apollos to return to Corinth to help them in their then unsatisfactory condition. For Apollos, though most eloquent, and doubtless very attractive as a speaker, had not sought,

and did not seek, to gather round himself, or to lessen the affection and value saints at Corinth had for Paul. The Apostle had full confidence in the purity of his aim and motives. Apollos, unwilling to go then, declined the service, hoping, however, to revisit them later. The servant of Christ, he was the servant of no man on earth; and not even apostolic authority or direction could make him go against his judgment. A lesson this for the Church of God. An apostolic see, or a Vicar of Christ ordering in the fields of service was then unrecognised and unknown. For Paul acquiesced in the refusal of Apollos, and did not press it (1 Cor. xvi. 12). At a later date, after Paul's first imprisonment at Rome and release from it, we read of Apollos once more, evidently still labouring and still enjoying the confidence of the Apostle (Titus iii. 13). A faithful servant of Christ, but subject to no man on earth as to his work for God and for Christ, is the picture presented of him.

We have been introduced by Luke to the chief labourers in the Word noticed in the Acts—viz., Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul, James, Timothy, Titus, and now Apollos. Stephen, of course, had long left this scene ere Apollos appeared on its stage. The rest, however, were still alive, and continued to work, though the historian no more concerns himself with the labours of several of them. And now Aquila and Priscilla were called to fresh service, since by the arrival of Paul at Ephesus a large increase of the assembly took place. Here, apparently, that useful service on their part began of opening their house for Christians to meet in assembly. Of the Church in their house mention is first made in 1 Cor. xvi. 19. And afterwards in different places, as we have already remarked, this couple provided under their roof a meeting-place for Christians. But still greater service would they be permitted to perform, even laying down their necks for Paul's life (Rom. xvi. 3).

Ephesus.—But we must not anticipate. Paul, having

passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus. Now, by the upper coasts, or country, we are to understand an inland route in contrast to a coast route, the coast being naturally viewed as on a lower level than the inland country. In harmony with this, some, and good authorities too, would read that he came *down* to Ephesus, for the city was situated on the river Cayster, a few miles from its mouth. It had a port, though already it was getting choked up with alluvial deposit. This was connected by a short canal with the river. And so Ephesus had become a great centre of commerce, nor had it as yet ceased to be a commercial centre for that part of Asia Minor. Moreover, it was the capital of Proconsular Asia, and the residence of the Proconsul. Its great fame, however, was occasioned by the temple of Diana, renowned throughout the ancient world. A centre of trade, the seat of government, and a stronghold of idolatry,—all this made it a place of no secondary importance. Would the gospel triumph here as it had done elsewhere? In the metropolis of Judaism it had flourished, so that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. In the seat of intellectual learning, where philosophers abounded, it had been preached, and converts had been gained. In Corinth, noted for licentiousness, much people had given evidence of the power of the truth, and were ranked amongst the company of Christians. Now, under the shadow of that temple of Diana, famed for its magnificence, and one of the wonders of the world, and in the city specially devoted to her worship, would the Gospel hold its own, and manifest there also its power to draw hearts to God and to His Son? Little, perhaps, had been done in aggressive work as yet, beyond the preaching in the synagogue. By Paul's labours the work would be enlarged, and the power of the truth be more widely exemplified.

An Important Question.—The Apostle's first act, on this visit to Ephesus, placed on record by Luke, was the asking

certain disciples he now met with, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" or, as the Revised Version renders it, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts xix. 2). They were believers already, so he did not question them about the new birth, nor did he challenge the reality of a Divine work in their souls. He asked about their receiving the Holy Ghost subsequent to believing. His question was in perfect keeping with his teaching in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (i. 13). Now, both the question asked, and the statement just quoted, draw attention to the receiving of the Holy Ghost *after* one has believed. It is therefore a blessing, a gift, consequent on believing—as the Apostle calls it, "the gospel of our salvation." Receiving the Spirit is, then, it is clear, something different from and subsequent to being born of the Spirit.

In this both Peter and John concur. In the Gospel of the latter, where we first meet with this truth of the gift of the Spirit, we read, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed (so John wrote) on Him should receive: for the Spirit was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). This gift could only come consequent on the Lord's ascension. Peter endorses this teaching as he states, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (Acts v. 32). And Paul can again be cited as a witness, since he wrote, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6).* The conclusion to be drawn

* In this last quotation we have followed the better reading, which will account for the difference from the text of the Authorised Version. The reader should remark that the better reading is *our* hearts, embracing both those who had been Jews and those who had been Gentiles. As sons we receive the Spirit.

from these Scriptures is irresistible. The gift of the Spirit is a perfectly distinct blessing from the new birth, and is bestowed on those who have *believed already* the gospel of their salvation, and who are already sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The importance of understanding this must be our excuse for again asserting it.

Now these men, in all about twelve, had not shared in that gift, though born of God, being, like Apollos before he met with Aquila and Priscilla, acquainted only with the baptism of John. An abnormal state this was, but certainly not unique, when we think of saints in these days.

The men questioned by Paul answer him at once, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," or rather, "whether the Holy Ghost is" (*i.e.* had come). Of the existence of the Holy Ghost, of course, they were aware. John the Baptist taught that, and had seen the Spirit, like a dove, descend on the Lord Jesus, at His baptism in Judæa. But the Baptist foretold that the Lord would baptise with the Holy Ghost—a future blessing then. Now, these disciples had not heard of that having taken place. So they answered as above; for their words, "whether the Holy Ghost is," are what may be called a technical form for describing His presence on earth. The contrast to this would be "is not." Of this last we have examples in the Old Testament: "Enoch *was not*, for God took him" (Gen. v. 24). So Jacob in his sorrow said, "Joseph *is not*, and Simeon *is not*" (Gen. xlii. 36). Their existence was not doubted, but of their continued presence on earth Jacob had no hope. He viewed them as dead. So the reply of these men meant, that of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost on earth in person they were wholly unaware. They had not known what it was to receive the gift of the Spirit.

Now, their answer was in perfect character with the teaching of the Gospel of John in the passage already cited. Till the Lord was glorified the Holy Ghost would not come,

nor be given as a gift to saints (John xvi. 7). And these disciples, knowing only the baptism of John, could not have known about the Lord's death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. They were not yet sealed. Are there not many believers who could not say that they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed? nor how that gift can normally be received?

That little company, instructed now by Paul, were subsequently baptised, and by the laying on of his hands they received the Holy Ghost. God in this attested the apostleship of Paul, showing that he was not inferior to any Apostle; for what Peter and John did at Samaria, Paul did at Ephesus—confer by imposition of his hands the gift of the Holy Ghost. And these men, like many Christians in their day, as those at Pentecost and those at Cæsarea, spake with tongues, an evidence of the gift conferred on them. For further remarks on receiving the Spirit we refer the reader to *Outline of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*,* pp. 47, 87-89.

Ministry at Ephesus.—An Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ was in the city which prided itself on being the temple-keeper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter. He had proved he was an Apostle, for he had by imposition of his hands conferred the Holy Ghost. Moreover, he was a teacher, and no ordinary one, being able to meet in discussion both Jews and Greeks (Acts xix. 8-10), and whom no one had yet vanquished in fair argument. In addition, he could work miracles, real ones, about which there was no deception, and in the displays of which there was no collusion. For three years his ministry was carried on in the city (xx. 31). Into few verses, however, is all this compressed (xix. 8-22). Yet, in a way very orderly, is it presented to the reader. For first we learn of his ministry in the Word, then of the display of

* Published by E. Marlborough & Co., London.

miraculous power, after which consequences following from both are recounted (13-20).

As to ministry in the Word, Paul, as his custom was, first presented the truth to his countrymen in the synagogue. There he spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing (or reasoning), and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. For all this the Jews there must have been somewhat prepared by the previous labours of Apollos, though doubtless the Apostle enlarged the scope of teaching, as he reasoned and persuaded in a fulness, probably, that Apollos had not. Not, be it observed, that he preached the *gospel* of the kingdom: that would have been dispensationally out of place. The Lord preached that. It, however, fell into abeyance on His death, to be revived in a coming day (Matt. xxiv. 14; Rev. xiv. 6, 7). But Paul reasoned about the kingdom of God, for that now exists on earth.

How did the frequenters of the synagogue treat the Apostle's ministry? Many doubtless received it. Some, on the other hand, were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the multitude. Discerning, as at Corinth, the temper of these, he left that field of labour, and separating the disciples, reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus.* The opposition in the synagogue really then furthered the work,—Gentiles doubtless would more readily attend in the school than in the synagogue; and Jews, if desirous to learn, could equally well listen to one of their nation teaching in that place. For about two years this went on; so that, as the historian tells us, "all they which dwelt in Asia (*i.e.* proconsular Asia) heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts xix. 10).

Miracles.—And divine attestation of the Apostle was

* "One" should probably be omitted here. The omission leaves it an open question whether that was merely the name of the building, or whether Tyrannus was living, and owned the school. He may quite have been alive, and have become a convert.

specially and plentifully accorded. All might see, who were willing to see, how Paul was owned as a servant of the God of heaven. A vessel to convey the knowledge of grace he certainly was; a vessel in which divine power was displayed he as surely was. For "God," we read, "wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out" (11, 12). Never before had such miracles been wrought in Ephesus, or indeed surpassed elsewhere. The Lord's words, "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father" (John xiv. 12), had abundant fulfilment through Paul as well as Peter.

Exorcists.—But these displays of miraculous power brought prominently to the front the question of exorcisms. And the marked effect of Paul's miracles led to attempts to rival and to equal them in the casting out of demons. Among the heathen there were those who professed to exorcise demons; among the Jews there were those who really did it. This the Lord distinctly owned when He was on earth (Matt. xii. 27); and Josephus tells us (*Ant.*, VIII. ii. 5) that Solomon had left for future times different forms of exorcising, which were in use, we suppose, in that historian's lifetime. For he relates a case which he himself had witnessed, of one Eleazer, a Jew, casting out a demon in the presence of Vespasian. At Ephesus, it seems, there were such people, wandering Jews, as Luke describes them, and among them were found sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who did this, using doubtless some old and recognised formulas thought suited for that purpose. But now it was seen that without the use of any of the prescribed charms, simply in the name of the Lord Jesus, demons were exorcised by Paul. This was something quite new at Ephesus. And certainly, by the admission of all, that name was efficacious in this work. For these exorcists, accustomed to charms or incantations which any who knew them could use with

effect, supposed that Paul was introducing a new charm, to which others could equally resort. For the name of the Lord Jesus, when used by him, had a power which no demon evidently had resisted.

The Name of Power.—Was that name, then, just a charm, only more potent than other charms in vogue in the province of Asia? That it was more powerful in exorcising, these sons of Sceva confessed. They would, then, use it. If Paul worked by it, why should not they? If it was all-powerful when used by one Jew, it would be equally so when used by others. Thus they had evidently reasoned. Two conditions, however, were requisite for any one to use it with effect. Both of them were lacking in these men. The one was genuine saving faith in Christ; the other a true confession of His Lordship. No one can use that name in conflict with demons unless he is a real believer and confessor of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the language of these men betrayed where they were, and what they were. "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth," was their word to the evil spirits. "Whom Paul preacheth." True, Paul did preach the Lord Jesus, for he believed on Him. But there is not a word here of acknowledgment on their part that they also believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the very way they spoke of Him, simply as Jesus, without giving Him a title of honour, distinctly showed that they did not own Him as the Lord. What right, then, had they to speak with any show of authority in that name? Could they deceive demons, and make them believe they were disciples of Christ, when in truth they were not?

Of two sons of Sceva we now learn, who attempted to use the name of Jesus as a charm. But the man possessed with the demon overcame *both* of them, as we should here read (Acts xix. 16). Supernatural power worked in him—demoniacal power, and the would-be exorcists fled the house naked and wounded! Moreover the demon spoke, definitely refusing compliance with their demand, and his words

must have struck all who heard of them: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know (or, am acquainted with), but ye, who are ye?" (15). The demon knew Jesus, he said, and by his language evidently meant to distinguish between the Lord and his servant Paul, as the second verb translated "I know" in the Authorised Version is different from the first in the original. Then that name was not a charm which just any one could use. The effect of this on the public was marked. Fear fell on all, both Jews and Greeks, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Under the shadow of the magnificent temple of Diana, where really demon worship was carried on (1 Cor. x. 20), the evil spirit confessed that he knew Him, whom Paul called the Lord. And many others had already left their victims, when commanded by Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus. Conflict with demoniacal power on the part of Paul ended with the signal discomfiture of the former.

Confession and Burning.—And this received signal confirmation in the fact, that the profession of those who used charms (*i.e.* magical arts), hitherto a lucrative business, received a severe blow. Many who had practised them, now converted, came and confessed their deeds. Revelations must have been made which doubtless astonished many of the common crowd, the uninitiated. Paul had nothing to conceal or to confess. But those now converted saw what their past ways had been, light shone on them, and confession on their part followed; for clearly the magical arts they had used were not of God. A new life received made them real and true, and the past had to be given up as inconsistent, to say the least, with that which was true. Further, not a few brought their books, in which the incantations and charms were recorded, and burned them publicly. A holocaust indeed!—the effect of the Word of God working in their consciences. Reality characterised them, and they thus gave proof of their sincerity; for the sacrifice made was no small one. The books now burnt,

they reckoned, amounted in value to fifty thousand pieces of silver—about £1,770, it is generally supposed. Remembering that money was nothing like as cheap as it is now, their pecuniary sacrifice was greater than those sums would be with us. And all this was the fruit of Paul's preaching, since we read, "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" (xix. 20). What effects, indeed, had it produced!

Exercise of Heart.—And now what a commanding position Paul occupied! The work had spread. All in Asia had heard the word of the Lord, and assemblies in that province were presumably numerous (1 Cor. xvi. 19). Special miracles, meeting the needs of afflicted creatures, were wrought, without one failure, we may be sure. Evil spirits were subject to the Apostle when he invoked the name of the Lord. And whilst his enemies had to acknowledge the power of that name, it became patent that none of them could successfully make use of it. All this, followed by the confession just mentioned, and the holocaust of magical books, might well have turned the head of any one in whom grace was not continually at work. Irresistible was the power he could wield, delegated though it was; and his teaching took effect on converts in numbers, and the work spread throughout the province. Such is the picture, a truthful one, drawn by the historian. To an outsider Paul must have seemed a wonderful person. So he was. But doubtless many, who were conscious of his power, little knew the exercises of heart he was passing through. We learn of them, however, and that from himself. Sorrows and anxieties pressed on him. The state of the Galatian converts, and the sectarian work and false doctrine working at Corinth, weighed heavily on his spirit. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. iv. 11), he wrote to the former. His anxiety about the latter, as to how they would receive his letter correcting what was wrong, he expressed to them, and has therefore made plain to us. "Furthermore, when I came to Troas

to preach Christ's Gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus, my brother; but taking my leave of them I went from thence into Macedonia" (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13). The care of all the Churches was on him, beside daily trials. That was no light matter. The gaping crowd, as they witnessed his miraculous powers, might have thought him a demi-god. We learn what anxiety pressed on him, who was but a man. Nor was that all, for the hostility of the Jews pursued him even in Ephesus (Acts xx. 19).

Demetrius.—The Apostle was now purposing in himself (*i.e.* in his spirit) shortly to move forward to Macedonia to revisit that country, and also Achaia. After which his ultimate destination at present was Rome, to which he hoped to get when he should first have visited Jerusalem again. A few years, however, were to pass before he set foot in the metropolis of the Roman earth. And much exercise and no small danger was he destined to face before he should leave Proconsular Asia. In view of his intended movements he sent forward Timothy and Erastus, he himself waiting yet in Asia for a season.

And now we read of a storm suddenly bursting out, which had doubtless for a time been brewing. The enemy very probably had selected as his time the month devoted to the worship of Diana, when her votaries from all parts gathered round her shrine. "About the time of the Passover," writes Lewin (vol. i., p. 405), "commenced the Artemisius, or the month of Diana, so called from the annual festival of the goddess observed at that period throughout Greece and Asia. Originally at Ephesus, certain days only of the month had been devoted to the service of the goddess, but eventually a decree was passed that the entire month should be kept sacred."* This

* It may interest the reader to learn that the decree has survived the ravages of time, having been found there by Chandler on a slab of white marble.

month of games and feasting may serve to explain the Apostle's words to the Corinthians, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. xvi. 8). Was he anticipating special opportunities for the Gospel throughout that festal month, the close of which would not be much before the time for the feast of Pentecost? But Demetrius seemed determined to have the first word.

A great concourse of people from all parts of the province then assembled together, afforded a fitting opportunity, for which perhaps that man had waited, to stir up popular passion. And the large number of converts now in Asia, of whom Epænetus was the firstfruits (Rom. xvi. 5) must necessarily have diminished the demand for silver shrines of Diana. It was this manufacture which proved so lucrative to Demetrius and his companions. Hence the falling off in his trade provided him with a grievance which his fellow-craftsmen could readily appreciate. He would lose, therefore, as he thought, no time in the prosecution of his project. "This Paul," as he contemptuously styled him, must be stopped, and that at once. Our craft, he said, is in danger, and the worship of the goddess will fall into disrepute. The argument addressed to the pocket had more weight, we may be well assured, than any real veneration for Diana. The train skilfully laid, the match was applied, and the city was, to speak metaphorically, in a blaze. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" those attending the meeting called by Demetrius now cried out. To the theatre they rushed, the crowd doubtless swelling as they went along. The place was soon filled with a vociferating multitude; and for two hours unceasingly they cried, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

A popular cry is easily raised and taken up, as it was in this case. All could shout out "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" But why were they shouting this? What was it all about? The greater part of the vast concourse

could not tell. So, though they had carried with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's companions, in their impetuous rush to the theatre, they evidently knew not what to do with them. No one touched either of them: not a hair of their heads was hurt. Had Paul appeared it might have been very different. He would have ventured himself into the midst of that excited and noisy throng; but the disciples prevented him, and the Asiarchs* who were friendly dissuaded him from his purpose. A perfect babel of voices there was, on which no one for a time could make any impression.

Not that no attempt was made. For we read that one Alexander attempted to address the multitude, but in vain. Put forward by the Jews, on their behalf we believe, and to make his defence, he found himself completely baffled. A fluent speaker, and a persistent opponent of Christianity, as we suppose, he and the other Jews doubtless counted on his getting a hearing. But a Jew! who would listen to such? The multitude had not yet learnt to distinguish between Jews and Christians. The Jews probably wished thus publicly by Alexander to dissociate themselves from Paul. In this they signally failed, and no one in the city had weight or influence enough to calm the excited crowd, till the town clerk, a public officer, came forward to address them. How foolish did they appear! Neither Gaius nor Aristarchus had attacked their goddess. Neither they, nor any Christians, had committed sacrilege by robbing the temple. To be quiet, therefore, and to do nothing rashly, became them all. If Demetrius had a grievance, there were the law courts: to them he should turn. To the proconsuls he should address himself, not to the excited crowd which was filling the theatre. So to disperse quietly became them all, lest the town authorities should be called to account for the uproar.

* The Asiarchs superintended the preparation for the games, and defrayed for the most part the expenses of them.

The assembly dispersed. It had done nothing but shout. It had effected nothing but to cover itself with ridicule. Its folly was shown up. Its senseless act was rebuked. The town clerk was wise. The people had been befooled by Demetrius and his fellows, as probably many a reflecting one thought when calmly reviewing the whole matter on the morrow.

We may now consider what effects had been produced by this effort on the enemy's part to stop the work. On each of the three missionary tours he attempted it, and on each journey in a different way. On the first the Jews, those bitter enemies of free grace, were most active in hounding on the Gentiles to drive away Paul and Barnabas. Successful in that at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the folly of their course was displayed; for, driven from Antioch, the Apostles preached in Iconium; driven out of that, they preached at Lystra; obliged to fly from Lystra, they evangelised in Derbe. So in all these cities, one after the other, the banner of the Cross was unfurled, and many recruits in the shape of converts to the faith were enrolled in the company of saints. On the second journey the device was to raise the question of the legality of the course on which Paul and his companions had embarked. At Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, this was the form of attack. Did it succeed? The magistrates at Philippi had to own their mistake in ill-treating and imprisoning illegally two Roman citizens, and virtually apologised to them for it. At Thessalonica they took security (perhaps bail) of Jason and others, and there apparently the matter dropped. The charge was foolish in the extreme. At Corinth the prosecutors had their appeal to the Proconsul dismissed, and they themselves summarily driven from the judgment seat. And now at Ephesus the shouting crowd looked foolish indeed, and had to disperse quietly, acquiescing in the prudent advice of the town clerk. Foiled was the enemy on each occasion. The word of the Lord was the more

spread abroad, and converts increased, who proved steadfast to the truth.

What shall we say of Paul at this time? As at Thessalonica, so at Ephesus, the rabble did not lay their hands on him. Had they caught him, as they had Gaius and Aristarchus, they might have taken his life. The disciples must have thought that, and the Asiarchs evidently felt that the excited multitude could not in their then temper be trusted. Of his feelings Luke tells us nothing; Paul, however, has not been so reticent. Writing to the Corinthians shortly afterwards, he says, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to (or, befell) us in Asia: that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence (or, answer) of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth [or rather, will] deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us" (2 Cor. i. 8-10). Great indeed had been his danger at this time. How keenly he felt that! Had we only the Acts we should never have known about it. Had we only that letter to the Corinthians, we should never have understood the allusion. Fittingly do the historian and the Apostle write. The work of the historian is especially to relate truthfully facts and events. This he has done, whilst the Apostle has put on record what were his feelings and the greatness of the trial. Is not this in harmony with that which we read elsewhere? We may learn in the Gospels of the treatment the Lord met with from men. We are taught in the Psalms, by the spirit of prophecy, what He felt at such times and in such circumstances (Pss. xxii., lxix.). It seems only fitting that the sufferer should express what were his feelings. That time in Asia must indeed have been one of special danger, if, as seems probable, it was to that the Apostle referred when writing to the Romans of the devotedness of Aquila and Priscilla; "who have,"

he said, "for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. xvi. 4). Having been with Paul at Corinth and at Ephesus, and nowhere else up to the date of the writing of that Epistle, Paul's words seem most likely to refer to that great trouble which had befallen him in Asia.

Paul suffered for the truth. He suffered for Christ. "I will show him," said the Lord to Ananias (Acts ix. 16), "how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." Great indeed they were. The Jews were especially, and nearly everywhere, hostile to him. Bitterness, malice, reproach, these he had to encounter. Stoning he had suffered. Stripes and imprisonments he had endured. Shipwrecks too he had experienced, straits of all kinds he had known (2 Cor. xi 23-28). Who would have gone through all that for nothing? What compensation, then, was there? The love of Christ in the present, and the assured hope of being with Him and reigning with Him in the future. These were encouragements for him. Are they sufficient for us?

XVI.

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—TO JERUSALEM.

ACTS XX.—XXI. 16.

TO Jerusalem was Paul bound, but desired to revisit first his scenes of labour in Europe. The poor saints at Jerusalem were laid on his heart, and he looked for collections to be made by Christians in heathen lands to supply their need (2 Cor. viii., ix.). The abortive attempt to stop the work at Ephesus being plainly manifested, Paul prepared to leave that city, but leisurely, no crowd now driving him away, and not before he exhorted the disciples, who might well require steadying after such a time of disturbance. And now, re-treading ground already traversed, Luke, in character with his brief account of the Apostle's labours in Asia on his second missionary tour, passes quickly on to notice Paul's return from Corinth back through Macedonia, by Troas, on his way to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 1-6). But first visiting Macedonia once more, where he had many ties, the fruit of previous labours in the Gospel, we are told that he now gave them much exhortation. Assemblies had been planted. So he busied himself with caring for the Christians.

Supplementing.—We pause here to point out how the Epistle to the Corinthians, above referred to, supplements the history of the Acts. Luke briefly states the character of Paul's ministry at this time in Macedonia, whilst he wholly passes over any notice of his being at Troas. It is

true he did not make any stay there, so there may have been but little to record. But why was his stay at Troas now so limited? On his first visit a vision had summoned him to Macedonia. At once he obeyed it. Now there was no vision calling him elsewhere. Why, then, did he not stop awhile? Why was he free to minister in Macedonia? The non-arrival of Titus at Troas—for Paul had expected him there—and the subsequent meeting with him in Macedonia, explains it all. Let the Apostle speak: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia" (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13). Again: "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 Cor. vii. 5-7). So now his burdened heart rebounded, as it were, from joy; for he writes, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation (2 Cor. vii. 4). His freedom in ministry, which there evidently was when in Macedonia, is now explained; and why the historian passes over all mention of the visit to Troas is easily to be understood. And now, after three months devoted to his visit to Corinth, the Apostle's thoughts turned towards Jerusalem. Thither would he journey with companions, selected by different assemblies, to carry up the alms for the poor saints in that city.

Returning.—Which way would he take? Two courses there were. He might go by sea to Syria, or journey through Macedonia, and embark near Philippi. A plot of the Jews against Paul determined his route. He returned

by land to Philippi, with his companions Sopater of Berœa, the son of Pyrrhus, as Luke most likely wrote; Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica; Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; as well as Tychicus and Trophimus, natives of Asia. Paul left Achaia. Separating on the road, but where is not stated, his companions preceded him to Troas, where they were to await his arrival, Paul tarrying a little at Philippi with Luke, with whom, as the change of pronouns now indicates, he resumed his journey. "Tarried for *us*," "*we* sailed," writes Luke. Can the tarrying "for *us*" (Acts xx. 5) indicate that all had reached Philippi together, and the rest, Paul excepted, started forward to Troas? That does not seem unlikely. Five days Luke and Paul passed on their way to Troas. Why such a length of time remains unexplained.

Breaking of Bread.—A week spent at Troas, a Lord's day came round. It was the last day of their visit there, and they met with the Christians in that seaport to break bread. "Upon the first day of the week, when we [as we should here read] came together to break bread" (Acts xx. 7). Here we get an intimation of the observance of that Christian service instituted by the Lord (Luke xxii. 19, 20), and disorders connected with which Paul had but recently written to correct for the Corinthians (1 Cor. xi. 20-29). Instituted by the Lord, we see His desire for His people. Revealed, too, to Paul, we learn it was to be carried on by converts from among the Gentiles. For the first disciples this service, doubtless, was intended to be a comfort, and the Lord's provision for that end (compare Jer. xvi. 7, in the Revised Version, with Luke xxii. 19, 20). From the prophet we learn of a practice of comforting mourners in breaking of bread for them, and giving them the cup of consolation. Sympathy is sweet, and kindness in the hour of sorrow most would value. But real comfort must come from a higher source than the human heart. The Lord would, then, comfort them indeed, unfolding the rich

blessings flowing from His death, by His body given for them, His blood shed for them. In addition to this, we learn from the Apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, of the connection between the Supper and the Church's hope. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). And now the notice of this service in the Acts shows us that it was the object that evening of their meeting. They met to break bread. It was a service by itself, and complete in itself; and, as the Gospels teach us, was wholly eucharistic in character. The Lord in instituting it gave thanks—nothing more. Christians in early days understood this, and blessed the cup of blessing (1 Cor. x. 16).

Nothing in Judaism resembled this. The Temple ritual could not compete with it. This the early disciples from the first discovered, as their "continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread at home" (Acts ii. 46), sufficiently instructs us. For in truth there never was a service like it, being based for us on the knowledge of God's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ, and by consequence of forgiveness of sins confessedly owned by all who take part in it, and each and all acknowledging, as sharing in the service, that there is no more sacrifice for sins (Heb. x. 18). Nothing, then, remains when engaged in it but to give thanks.*

Assembled for this distinctive Christian service, Paul preached (or rather, discoursed) unto them, ready to depart on the morrow. And no doubt, conscious as he was of dangers looming in the distance (Acts xx. 23), he was the more anxious to give the disciples all he could in his parting words. So he continued his speech until midnight. The room in which they were must have been of no small dimensions, for there were *many* lights in that upper

* For further remarks on this service the reader is referred to a little book by the author, entitled *Simple Papers on the Church of God.*

chamber; yet we can fancy, what from the lights and from the company, the heat was great; and to one then present sleep was overpowering. For Eutychus, a young man, borne down by sleep, fell from the third story, and was taken up (not as, but) dead. Life was extinct. But Paul could restore him to life. He did. The sorrow of parting with the Apostle was not to be deepened by the death of the young man. The Apostle assured them that Eutychus was again alive. Joy must have pervaded the whole company on hearing that. And surely with fulness of heart must they all have taken part in the Lord's Supper which followed. Sleep was banished from the rest that night. For Paul had not finished speaking till break of day. Then he departed on his way to Jerusalem.

Once again, after the lapse of years, he revisited Troas, and left a cloak there with Carpus. Of this he tells Timothy, asking him to bring it to Rome, where he was a second time a prisoner (2 Tim. iv. 13). But the cloak did not, we believe, reach Paul in time. Ere Timothy got there the Apostle had done for ever with earth, and cloaks, and parchments, and books. By the order of the Emperor Nero he was executed. By the permission of the Lord that took place, and the labourer and soldier entered into rest through death.

To Miletus.—To return. Again the company moved forward, and a second time was it divided. All went by sea to Assos, except Paul, who journeyed thither overland, a distance of about nineteen miles. Why he did this has occasioned many conjectures. But since nothing more than conjecture can be offered the reader, and conjecture founded on no known fact, it is better to leave all that alone. At Assos he rejoined his companions, when they sailed for Mitylene, and, coasting along by Chios and touching at Samos,* they reached Miletus on the fourth day of their voyage from Assos.

* "And tarried at Trogyllium" is very generally omitted.

Address to the Ephesian Elders.—From Miletus he sent to Ephesus to summon the elders of the assembly there to meet him. They came at once, though it involved a journey for them of thirty-six miles to reach him. But which of them would not gladly have taken that trouble at the expressed wish of the Apostle, and have gone all the way to Miletus when learning that he was there? Reaching Miletus, Paul addressed them, and Luke has preserved the text of it (Acts xx. 18-35). It is the only discourse of the Apostle on this third journey that has come down to us. Not a word of Paul's ministry in Macedonia, when he was set free in spirit by the coming to him of Titus, has survived. Nor did a syllable of the long and memorable discourse on that night at Troas, so far as we know, spread abroad outside the walls of that upper room. Not so with the address to the Ephesian elders. We are familiar with it, and can see the suitability of its preservation, since it acquaints us with the *spirit* in which Paul laboured, and with the *different lines* of teaching which he handled.

And first as to the *spirit* in which he worked. He was intensely in earnest, and ardently desired the welfare of souls. "Ye yourselves know," he said, "from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house" (xx. 18-20). With tears, too, had he warned each one night and day for three years (31).

Had his love and interest in them declined by absence? Both were just as warm as ever. So he warns them of coming dangers—dangers from without and dangers from within. Grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock; whilst from among themselves would men arise, speaking perverted things to draw away disciples after them

(30). Had Paul sought to gather round himself? They well knew that he had not. He had not received temporal support from them. "I have coveted," he said, "no man's silver or gold or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you in all things how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (33-35). Did he shrink from suffering, or from death for Christ's sake? He would have them know that, though the Holy Spirit testified in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited him, he held not his life of any account as dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus (22-24).

Then as to the *different lines* of that *ministry*. 1st. He had testified, both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ (21). 2nd. He had testified the Gospel of the grace of God (24). 3rd. He had preached the kingdom (25). 4th. He had declared to them the whole counsel of God (27).

Such was the spirit in which he had worked, and such were the great outlines of his ministry among them. An assembly dear to him, and how dear to God! It was God's assembly, which He had purchased with His own blood. Alas! how soon were defections to come in! Galatia and Corinth were examples of the rapid growth of evil in assemblies which had once enjoyed the personal ministry of Paul. So of Ephesus, ere Paul died, he had to write, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes" (2 Tim. i. 15). And later on in the Revelation (ii. 2) we learn that they had been tested by those who called themselves apostles, but were not, and they had found them liars. The warnings were not without cause, and also we can say were not in vain.

Paul was an evangelist, and also a teacher. Varied, therefore, was his range of truth, and distinct, he informs us, were the lines of it. And here in his enumeration of them we can see a beautiful order; a hint, too—may we not say it?—to labourers in the Word. For first, in dealing with souls there is the need of conscience work to go forward. *Repentance and faith*, then, he begins with. The one without the other might drive a soul to despair. God does not desire that; so an object—the Lord Jesus Christ—is presented. With that the *Gospel of the grace of God* is found in season. Now with Paul that Gospel was a full one, and embraced far more than many called evangelists would suppose. The Gospel in his thoughts took in the range of truth in Rom. i.-viii., and part of Eph. ii. as well. His was a teaching Gospel, as well as just the preaching of forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. And much of it was suited only for believers, as the Epistle to the Romans clearly indicates. Hence the mention of it comes in well after faith and repentance. Then, side by side with the Gospel, *the kingdom* was preached. That he next mentions—a subject treated of in the Gospels; nor is it foreign to truth taught in the Epistles. It formed a theme of apostolic preaching (Acts viii. 12, xiv. 22, xix. 8, xxviii. 23, 31), and is introduced in most of the Pauline Epistles. These great subjects mentioned, there comes, last in order, *the whole counsel of God.* Teaching this is only suited for Christians. These counsels concern God's purposes about His Son, as well as His purposes towards saints, and that special line of instruction called Church truth. In Epistles, as that to the Ephesians, that to the Colossians, and that to the Hebrews, these counsels are especially unfolded. Very distinct, then, are these different lines, but all needed for the saint to be fully instructed in Christian revelation.

And now taking leave of the Ephesian elders, but warning them of coming dangers, he states what was to be

their resource. To no one on earth does he turn them. Neither of Timothy, who well knew Paul's doctrine (2 Tim. iii. 10), nor of Titus, who had been also a trusted workman, does he make mention. To no man, to no order of men, does he direct them. He turns them solely "to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build up, and to give the inheritance" (as Luke probably wrote) "among all them that are sanctified" (Acts xx. 32). To God he commends them. Of much about Him had he just made mention. He was calling to repentance. He had sent forth glad tidings of His grace. He had a kingdom. And He had revealed Divine counsels. Then to the Word of God's grace he turned them, in which, and in which alone, could they find the full revelation that had been vouchsafed us, even the Word which liveth and abideth (1 Peter i. 23). A full provision this was, but it reminds all of their responsibility. Suitable, then, as we have already observed, was the introduction of this address in the history of that third and, for the time, closing missionary journey. A picture of Paul's labours, and an outline of his teaching, come in so well at this juncture.

Four Remarks.—We would now note: 1st. The resource for the saints pointed out by the Apostle is a virtual denial of the doctrine of apostolical succession. He commends them to no one but God. 2nd. We are reminded of the activity of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, as the Divine Person present on earth, by the words of Paul respecting the elders, that the Holy Ghost had made them bishops or overseers. 3rd. It is evident that the elders and bishops were one class, not two. The former term is their title of dignity; the latter describes their service. And if corroboration of this is wanted, Titus i. 5-7 confirms it. 4th. We have in this address of Paul's a saying of the Lord Jesus Christ not elsewhere recorded. The personal ministry of Christ had not dropped into oblivion. Just at the opportune moment it reappears. How fully,

how beautifully the Master illustrated His teaching! He gave Himself for us.

Paul's address was finished. His last words—and suitably so—were a reminder of the grace displayed by the Lord, and of that which should characterise His people. Now he knelt down, and prayed with the elders. His heart went out for them. Their feelings went out towards him, and they kissed him, weeping sore and falling on his neck, distressed that they should see him no more. Then all accompanied him and his fellow-travellers to the ship.

The Voyage.—The ship sailed, and we can well understand how, with tears in their eyes, and with sorrowing hearts, the elders watched that vessel till it was lost to sight. Luke now tells us of the route. Taking a straight course, they reached Coos that day. On the next they reached Rhodes. On the third they arrived at Patara, the port of Xanthus, the capital of Lycia. At this port, finding a ship bound for Phœnicia, they embarked thereon, and proceeded direct to Tyre, leaving Cyprus on the left. It was about a three days' voyage from Patara. Reaching Tyre, they tarried seven days, till the vessel was ready to take them on to Ptolemais, the modern Acre, one day's sail farther. There they left the ship to proceed by land.

Tyre.—A word on Tyre. The ancient seaport of Phœnicia, renowned of old, from the days of David downwards, remained still of importance, despite all its vicissitudes, rising phœnix-like from its ashes, though not always on the same spot. For continental Tyre, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, as predicted by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel,* was succeeded by insular Tyre, built on the island opposite the old site. This in turn was taken by Alexander, who constructed an embankment to connect the island with the mainland. Thus he succeeded in his conquest. Yet Tyre rose again; no longer insular, because of the earthwork just mentioned, though on the site of the insular city.

* Isa. xxiii.; Jer. xxv., xxvii., xlvii. 4; Ezek. xxvi.

In the Apostles' days it was still a great centre for trade—the Levantine trade. Here, then, detained a week, whilst the ship was prepared for its further voyage, Paul and his company, availing themselves of the opportunity, spent it in consorting with the Christians in the place, to all there dear, and to some certainly no stranger; for he must have passed through it once or more in earlier days. But what gives it such an interest in connection with the Apostle's history is the fact that here, during that week's sojourn, the disciples of the place said through the Spirit that Paul should not go to Jerusalem (xxi. 4). In every city already, as we have learnt, the Holy Ghost testified that bonds and afflictions were in store for him. This fresh intimation of the future was more definite, in that it forbade his visit to the Holy City. If he, then, went, it would be not only to court danger, but to disobey this new revelation. Ardently desirous of the welfare of his countrymen, even this distinct communication did not deter him, nor did another, of which we shall read very shortly.

The week ended, the ship ready to sail, the whole company of the Christians, the women and children included, brought them on the way outside the city. Apart from the busy throng, in the quiet which the country afforded, and under the canopy of heaven, they held a prayer-meeting. At Miletus, Paul had prayed with the elders on parting. Now, writes Luke, "we prayed." Several doubtless took part, kneeling on the shore to commend the Apostle, and those with him, to the care and keeping of their common Lord and Saviour. It must have been an interesting and affecting time to all present, Christian affection and Christian interest for each other thus displaying itself. The travellers then embarked. The others returned to their homes.

Reaching Ptolemais, they stayed one day with the brethren, then moved on by land to Cæsarea, and found under the roof of Philip the Evangelist rest, hospitality,

and surely a most hearty welcome. Here they stayed many days—a rest for Paul after all the fatigues of the voyage, and a little time of quiet before encountering the storm at Jerusalem. Of any incidents in their stay here we have no account, Luke only mentioning that Philip had four daughters who prophesied—gifted women who, in their proper sphere, helped on the work of God. For we may be sure that Paul, who had so lately set before the Corinthians what women might do in the assembly, would not have suffered Philip's daughters to do what the Holy Ghost forbade. We have said that we have no incidents mentioned connected with Paul's stay at Cæsarea. One exception there is to this. To it we now turn.

Agabus.—For long we have heard nothing of Agabus. He now reappears. First introduced to us at Antioch (xi. 28), when he visited that city from Jerusalem, we here meet with him again going from Judæa to Cæsarea. Like James, he seems to have lived in the land, and in the province of Judæa. Now, visiting Cæsarea, he meets afresh with Paul, and taking the Apostle's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands with it, and announced his approaching imprisonment. We say, *approaching*; for though Agabus fixed no date, it was but a few days afterwards, we believe, that Paul found himself a prisoner. "Thus saith the Holy Ghost," we read, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (xxi. 11). More and more definite, then, became the prophetic announcements regarding Paul. When at Corinth he had asked the prayers of the Roman saints, that he might be delivered from them that did not believe in Judæa (Rom. xv. 31). Addressing the Ephesian elders, he had told them how in every city the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited him. He was aware, then, that these warnings were really from God. Is it not the more remarkable that he did not heed what he heard at

Tyre? Warned there not to go to Jerusalem, he learned at Cæsarea that he would be delivered by the Jews into the hands of the Romans. Still he desisted not. Neither the command of the Spirit at Tyre, nor the entreaties of the saints at Cæsarea, backed by those of Luke and others, prevailed to dissuade him. He would go on, ready to die at Jerusalem, if need be. Expostulation and entreaty proving useless, all desisted, saying, "The will of the Lord be done!" There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence (Eccles. iii. 7). The time to speak more on that point was passed. The time to be silent they recognised had come.

To Jerusalem.—The last stage of the journey was now entered upon. Taking up their baggage, they set forth for Jerusalem, a two days' journey (Acts xxiii. 31, 32). Their number was augmented by certain of the Christians from Cæsarea, who brought with them an old disciple, one Mnason of Cyprus, with whom Paul and his company were to lodge in the Holy City. Possibly at this time Jerusalem was full with the multitude attending the feast of Pentecost. And if Mr. Lewin is correct (vol. ii. 108), the feast began on the evening of their arrival, at six o'clock. Entering Jerusalem, Paul received from the brethren a hearty welcome, soon, however, to prove the mistake of yielding to their wishes.

Here the third missionary journey ended. No visit to Antioch, as on previous occasions, was possible, even if it had been in contemplation. Paul knew at Cæsarea that going to Jerusalem was going to imprisonment. Plans and desires he had cherished of still further journeys. He had hoped to visit Rome, and perhaps also Spain. Whether he ever made a visit to the latter country cannot be definitely stated. Certainly, after his release from the first imprisonment in Rome, he was again in the East, visiting Ephesus, Macedonia, and Crete (1 Tim. i. 3: Titus i. 4). The desire to reach Rome was, however,

granted, but under circumstances that he had not contemplated when writing his letter to the saints in that city; and the Divine promise that he should reach it was communicated to him at a time, and in a place, which doubtless he had not expected. At night, and in the prison at Jerusalem, the Lord appeared, and promised that he should witness for Him in Rome (Acts xxiii. 11). But we must not anticipate.

Looking back on the journey just concluded, what can we say about it? How had the truth triumphed! In Ephesus, that stronghold of idolatry, it won its way in sight of that temple of the so-called goddess Diana, whom all Asia and the Roman earth worshipped. Votaries were detached from her cult, and interest in her was perceptibly on the decline. Throughout the province of Asia Christians were to be found, and assemblies had sprung up. All that dwelt in Asia had heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. Charms, too, were flung aside, magical rites were renounced, and books which had treated of them were publicly burnt by their possessors. Demon power, too, succumbed to the name of the Lord Jesus. The gospel was indeed triumphing, and Demetrius and his fellows could not but admit it. A great feature of this journey was the discomfiture of demons, and the acknowledged power over them of the name of the Lord Jesus. In addition to all this, Paul's apostleship was placed beyond the reach of doubt or cavil, the miracles which he wrought being in no degree behind those credited to Peter.

We next enter upon the third part of the Acts, in which God's grace to His failing servant is markedly and beautifully displayed.

XVII.

PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

ACTS XXI. 17—XXIII. 35.

WELCOMED by the brethren in Jerusalem, Paul and his company, on the day following, whilst the feast of Pentecost was proceeding, had an interview with James and all the elders. To the tale of God's work among the Gentiles and in heathen lands, by his ministry, all doubtless listened with lively interest, and glorified God. Not a word had any one to say against the work of grace which had gone on abroad. But he was in Jerusalem, and reports prejudicial to him were rife in the holy city. To those reports definite denials should be given, and no one could so well do that, they all would urge, as Paul himself.

Reports.—But reports—what evils have they often wrought, taken up, believed, and spread abroad, without the retailers or first propagators taking pains to ascertain on what foundation they rested! People's characters have been thereby blackened most unfairly, and hearts have been broken most ruthlessly. For many are often more ready to listen to the reports, and so imbibe a prejudice hostile to the individual concerned, than to receive even the most positive contradiction of them on grounds which cannot be questioned. Nehemiah was subject to such in his day (Neh. vi. 6). Little wonder that Paul, the champion of free grace, was the object of malicious attacks in his day! What were the reports? First, that he

taught the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. The first of these was wholly untrue. Timothy's circumcision, on which Paul had insisted (Acts xvi. 3), gave the lie to it. The second had some foundation, since Paul had rebuked Peter to the face at Antioch for withdrawing from social intercourse with Gentiles, by not eating with them (Gal. ii. 12-14). Pusillanimity, however, marked the leaders at Jerusalem. Instead of having this last question threshed out, and the proper course for Christians with reference to Judaism distinctly laid down, they desired evidently no controversy on the matter, but urged on Paul open conformity to Jewish ordinances to refute the charges against him.

Zealous for the Law.—Myriads among the Jews, so they affirmed, had believed, but all were zealous for the law (Acts xxi. 20). Evidently full Christian ground was unknown at Jerusalem. To have died through law to law (Gal. ii. 19) to live to God had not formed part of their professed creed as yet. To have died to the law by the body of Christ, to be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, to bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. vii. 4), was teaching to which the Christians at Jerusalem had evidently not yet intelligently listened, nor to which were they ready to subscribe. "To go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13), was a step they had never thought of taking. The superiority of the Lord Jesus, as Apostle and High Priest of their confession, over Moses and Aaron had apparently not dawned upon them; nor had they apprehended the truth that, by the sacrifice of Christ, sacrificial rites at the brazen altar had for Christians been terminated, seeing that believers were perfected for ever by the one offering (Heb. x. 14); and forgiveness being secured for them by His one sacrifice, there could be no more offering for sin (Heb. x. 18). Christian ground, as distinct

from Jewish ground and position, they had evidently never been taught, and knew not, we may surely say, the Christian privilege of entering the holiest with boldness by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19), as well as that of intelligently feeding on the sin-offering, the blood of which had, as it were, been taken into the sanctuary for sin (Heb. xiii. 10-12). Myriads of Jews believed, but as long as the Temple worship continued they joined in it. Full Christian privileges, and distinct Christian ground, they were slow to apprehend. On border ground there was the tendency for them to remain, content pretty much with truth common to Jews and Christians, the death of the Lord Jesus and His coming again excepted. How needful, then, was the Epistle to the Hebrews, written, as we see, to those who ought to have made progress in the school of Christianity, but who needed still to learn the first principles of the oracles of God (Heb. v. 12). Amongst such did the Apostle here find himself. The appeal to Paul by James and the elders shows where they were, and the Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrates clearly what they lacked.

If it is asked, How was this, seeing that there were very godly people there, notably James, styled the Just? the answer may well be, that very probably there was a tendency in the leaders to go on as they had begun from the commencement of Christianity at Pentecost; and very possibly there was a desire in many for an easier path, thus avoiding fresh persecution. Some, indeed, had suffered in early days even unto death, and others had known imprisonment for Christ's sake. There had been, too, the spoiling of their goods by adversaries (Heb. x. 32-34). Things, however, appear at this time to have quieted down, and James and the rest could live in comparative peace and security, though the Jews were ready and willing, if they could, to tear the Apostle Paul's body limb from limb.

A Proposal.—Now Paul was at Jerusalem, and many of his countrymen viewed him as a renegade Jew, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazoræans. His presence, when known, would stir questions and arouse controversy. But if he showed by his acts in the Temple that he was after all as good a Jew as others, all would be well, and the stories afloat about him could be treated as calumnies. This James and the elders desired, and there seemed doubtless to them a providential opening for it to be brought about. Four men they had, with a vow on each, from which, till the rites prescribed by the law had been satisfied, they could not be free. Let Paul, in conformity with the custom, take on himself to defray the expenses of these four men, as identified with them. All would then see that he kept the law like any one else of the seed of Jacob. Now, this advice, they urged, if followed, would in no way cancel the decree of the council of Jerusalem about Gentile converts. To that decree James and all still adhered. *Then* it had been a question of Gentiles. *Now* it was one about Jews.

A False Position.—Had the truth of the Body of Christ been held by them in intelligence and in power, they must have seen that part of the Body could not be free from legal observances, which were properly binding, and to be submitted to by the other part. But, as we have said, full and distinctive Christian teaching was really unknown to the bulk of them. To their proposal, however, Paul assented. We know his ardent love for his kinsmen after the flesh (Rom. ix. 1-3, x. 1), and his longing desire for their salvation. Perhaps that made him the more willing to consent, and tended to blind him to the false position into which he would put himself. The eye of the Lord was, however, on His servant. So whilst allowing him to be persuaded into this compromising position, for his profit surely, and for our warning, He delivered him out of it in a very unexpected way.

For, like David of old, Paul now had a way of escape

opened up which he could never have brought about. David was in a thoroughly wrong position when he fled to Achish, King of Gath, and was casting in his lot with the Philistines against his own nation of Israel, and professing his willingness to fight on the side of the uncircumcised host. What a position to be placed in! The former champion of Israel, and conqueror of Goliath, in the ranks of the very race against which he had fought so successfully! But how to get out of that position—that was the difficulty. God then came in. "The lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away" (1 Chron. xii. 19). Freed from his false position, David had to learn, when he reached the blackened remains of Ziklag, what trouble he had brought on himself and others by moving forward to the battle-field under the banner of the King of Gath.

And now Paul was in as thoroughly a false position. And soon all must see it, if the time came for him to stand at the brazen altar with the prescribed offerings. For if the vow of these men was that of a Nazarite, as is commonly supposed, sacrificial victims must be offered—viz., a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, an ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, and a ram for peace-offerings (Numb. vi. 14)—for each of them. Paul had charged himself with all that, conforming thereby to a practice which had sprung up among the Jews, of richer people taking on themselves to defray the expenses or sacrifices of poorer brethren.* The appointed seven days were running out, and Paul, at their close, would have appeared at the altar with his sin-offering. What a triumph that would have been to the Judaising party! What a blow to the truth, so firmly, so boldly, contended for by Paul! For where remission of sins is there is no more offering for sin (Heb. x. 18) is Christian teaching, which was now gravely imperilled. But as with David, so with Paul—the Lord came in.

* See Josephus, *Ant.*, XIX. vi. 1.

David never entered the battle with Achish. Paul never approached the brazen altar with his sin-offering. For when the days were almost ended, Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the Temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him. The man who taught all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and that place was actually in the very courts of the sanctuary, and, as they supposed, had polluted the holy place, by introducing Trophimus, an Ephesian, into the part that no Gentile could enter. In this supposition they were quite mistaken. Nevertheless, now commenced an uproar. The city was moved. People ran together, and, seizing hold of Paul, dragged him out of the Temple, intending to kill him outside its sacred precincts. But ere they could accomplish their purpose, the chief captain, with centurions and soldiers, ran down into the midst of the crowd. The appearance of the military saved Paul's life. The multitude left off beating him. The chief captain took him. He was a prisoner now in the hands of the Romans, and bound with two chains.

The prophecy of Agabus had come true. But enmity against Paul was not yet appeased, nor was the noise of the crowd lessened. Vociferating, some one thing, and some another, it was impossible for the chief captain to understand the cause of their hostility, so he commanded Paul to be brought into the castle,* where, out of the sound of the uproar, he might learn what it was all about. But as the crowd pursued Paul, crying out, "Away with him!" and as the pressure became so great, and the efforts of his assailants so determined, not content with having already

* Either the barracks belonging to the castle or tower of Antonia, or perhaps the castle itself. The word used by Luke may mean either. Josephus thus describes the fortress: "Now, as to the tower of Antonia, it was situated at the corner of two cloisters of the court of the Temple, of that on the west, and that on the north; it was erected upon a rock of fifty cubits in height, and was on a great precipice; it was the work of King Herod, wherein he demonstrated his natural magnanimity. . . . On the corner, where it joined

beaten him, he had to be carried up the stairs, borne of the soldiers. Often had his life been threatened, and often had he been in imminent danger of losing it. But each time the Lord had delivered him. Now again his life was endangered, and afresh was he rescued from death. For nothing less than that his enemies clamoured. Yet he had done them no wrong. Why, then, was he singled out as alone worthy of death at that time? No outcry was raised against James and the elders, professed ringleaders of the sect of the Nazoræans in common with Paul. Why was he thus pursued? Because he had boldly and persistently refused to compromise the Gospel of the grace of God. Those once Gentiles were fellow-heirs, and of the same Body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (Eph. iii. 6). This he had maintained. And this was the real cause of his persecution, and of the clamour for his death.

But was deliverance from death the only deliverance he experienced at that time? Many, and perhaps most even, of the Christians in Jerusalem thought only of the preservation of his life. We, however, see that there was another deliverance brought about by the chief captain's interposition. Paul was kept thereby from compromising the truth. Are we casting a stone at him? By no means. But facts are facts, and Scripture deals with them. He had, as we may remember, been expressly forbidden by the Spirit, through the disciples at Tyre, to go to Jerusalem; nevertheless, he went there, and nothing but God's intervention by the Roman power prevented the Jews on the one hand

to the two cloisters of the Temple, it had passages down to them both, through which the guard (for there always lay in this tower a Roman legion) went several ways among the cloisters, with their arms, on the Jewish festivals, in order to watch the people, that they might not there attempt to make any innovations; for the Temple was a fortress that guarded the city, as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the Temple; and in that tower were the guards of those three."—*Wars of the Jews*, V. v. 8.

from accomplishing their murderous purpose, or Paul on the other from compromising the truth, which his presence at the altar of burnt-offering with the sacrifices required by law must have brought about. It was a mercy to the whole Church that Paul was taken prisoner by the Romans. Could the teaching of the Hebrews have been subsequently set forth, if the great champion of the full Christian faith had at this time practically surrendered the latter by yielding to the doctrine of expediency? The chief captain's prompt appearance was a deliverance indeed. The false position in which Paul had put himself he was in no longer. And what he could not have done before he could with a free spirit do now—viz., boldly address the Jews; and though not in the Temple court, yet from a more commanding position, even the stairs of the castle.

Asking leave from Claudius Lysias, who courteously granted it, after learning that he was not that Egyptian who had formerly stirred up sedition, and led out into the wilderness a number of assassins, Paul from his elevated and therefore more commanding position intimated by gesture his desire to address the excited multitude. Great silence now prevailed, and he proceeded to speak. Greek he could speak with facility, as the chief captain learnt, to his evident surprise; but he began to address his countrymen in a tongue more dear to them—that of Aramaic which is called by Luke Hebrew. It had since the Babylonish captivity become the common tongue of the home-born Jews. There is a charm in one's own language, a melody to the native ear, however harsh and uncouth it may sound to that of a foreigner. To that the Jews were not indifferent. So hearing him speak in Aramaic, they were the more quiet.

Paul's Defence.—Though a prisoner in the hands of the Romans, he was free in spirit. And the opportunity now occurring, he availed himself of it to let them know, what hitherto doubtless they had never heard, the cause of the great

change in his life, the result of his visit to Damascus. Commencing by reminding all of his Jewish education and training, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and well instructed in the law, and the added traditional teaching of the fathers, of his zeal toward God in old days there was no doubt. Proofs in abundance were forthcoming. He had persecuted the Way unto death, and populated prisons with suspected and incriminated persons. Of his determination to put down Christianity, if possible, he had given many and marked proofs; and the high priest and the elders were well acquainted with them. Who had more determinedly played the *rôle* of persecutor than he? Zeal for God had indeed characterised him. Zeal for God he owned (xxii. 3) characterised them. But there may be zeal for God without knowledge. That he had experienced in his own case. That, he well knew, animated the multitude before him. He, however, was a changed man. What had made him cease from being the relentless persecutor, to become the ardent champion of the faith? They should hear. He had seen Jesus the Nazoræan. He had heard Him speak, but it was from heaven.

The crucified One had appeared to Paul in a glory above the brightness of an Eastern noonday sun. He had spoken directly to him, calling him by his name. But further. Charging him with persecuting the One who was addressing him from heaven, He directed him still to proceed to Damascus, and there to learn what he was now to do. That heavenly visions could be vouchsafed to men at times no Jew could deny. That obedience to directions from heaven was incumbent on any one thus favoured, which of the multitude before him would in his sober senses for a moment dispute? Would any take the ground that he was under a complete misapprehension as to the vision of which he now told them? He had an unimpeachable witness to confirm it. One Ananias, a devout man according to the law, and well reported of by all the Jews at Damascus,

had visited him when in his blindness, the effect of that heavenly vision. He endorsed the fact that Paul had seen the Lord Jesus at that time, and had heard words from His mouth. Moreover, he confirmed what the Lord had said to Saul when on the ground outside the city walls (xxvi. 16-18), that he was to be "a witness for Him unto all men of what he had seen and heard." A worldwide commission had Paul then received. *All men* were embraced within the range of it. What could he, then, do? The Nazoræan, as the Jews contemptuously called the Lord, had appeared to him, had spoken to him, and had entrusted him with such a commission. To profess himself His disciple, to forsake his past ways of persecution, which clearly were evil, surely became him. So hearkening to the admonition of Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling upon His name" (xxii. 16), he was enrolled as a disciple of Christ by baptism, and washed away his sins, calling upon the Lord's name. Thenceforth he served Him, through whose servant and messenger his eyesight had been perfectly restored.

Who could suppose that he could do anything else? Yet he had more to tell them, and also to tell us, that of which we have not previously read. He had another vision. A second time had the Lord appeared to him and spoken to him. On this occasion the appearance was the more remarkable, seeing that it was in the Temple at Jerusalem on Paul's first return to the city after his conversion. Engaged there in prayer, he fell into a trance, and saw the Lord, who said to him, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me" (xxii. 18). With that freedom which characterised, as we have seen, both Ananias (ix.) and Peter (x.), Paul reminded the Lord, he here tells his hearers, of his former ways as a persecutor, with which the Jews were cognisant. His past conduct he looked on

as sufficient to make the Jews more ready to listen to him. But the Lord's reply was imperative and decisive. "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (xxii. 21). What could he do, he might ask, but endeavour, as he had done, to carry out his mission?

The Lord had appeared to him in God's house at Jerusalem. Would the God of Israel, jealous of His glory, have allowed in that Temple the appearance of a blasphemer or impostor, as the Jews regarded Christ? Who then and what must He be who had there spoken to Paul? It was One who had authority, and could send him on a mission from Himself. "I will send thee." Who in Jehovah's house could thus speak but He who is God over all, blessed for evermore?

Another thought this second appearance suggests. God had not dwelt in His earthly house since the captivity. He left it in Ezekiel's day (Ezek. x. 18, 19, xi. 22, 23). The house continued bereft of the Divine Presence all the time the Lord was on earth (Matt. xxiii. 38). And the only occasion on which that actual building had been graced by the Divine Presence was that time, when the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul and told him to leave Jerusalem; "for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." A command from One speaking with authority in the Temple! What, again Paul might ask, could he do but obey? True, how true, were the Lord's words! And if confirmation was needed, soon was it supplied. The renewed vociferations of the crowd, as the Apostle pronounced the last words of the Lord's command, supplied it. "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it was * not fit that he should live" (xxii. 22), was a sad and solemn confirmation of what the Lord had said years before. Was Paul disappointed at the reception his defence had met with? Very possibly. For very decided were the renewed manifestations of hostility.

* So the better reading, implying, as Alford remarks, that he ought to have been put to death long ago.

They cried out. They rent their garments. They threw dust into the air. So, if the chief captain did not understand Aramaic, he could be at no loss to perceive the effect of the address.

A Roman.—But what was it all about? What caused the uproar at first? And then, after Paul's defence, what called forth the cries, and the renewed exhibition of intense hostility? How could Lysias, responsible for the peace of the city, get at the truth, and so understand the situation? He resolved, without further intercourse with Paul, to scourge him, in hopes that something might be elicited from the victim to throw light on the subject. Barbarous treatment we should say, but in character with the times. Orders were at once given to that effect, and the centurion entrusted with them proceeded to execute them. Paul was tied up with the thongs for that purpose. Then he spoke, and asked a question, the importance of which he well knew, and the importance of which the centurion at once perceived. "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (25). That was enough. The threatened scourging was averted, for the centurion at once went and warned the chief captain of the privilege which Paul enjoyed. He was a Roman. Ascertaining this fact from personal inquiry, Lysias at once became afraid because he had even bound him. A Roman citizen had rights which no official in any part of the empire could trample on with impunity. And especially after the celebrated prosecution of Verres by Cicero officials everywhere would be more careful. To bind a Roman uncondemned was unlawful; to scourge him was a heinous offence. Paul, now released, passed the night in custody of the soldiers in the castle of Antonia.

Before the Council.—But what should the chief captain do with his prisoner? On what ground could he detain him? Or should he go free? Puzzled evidently as to the course he should pursue, his next device was to

summon the council to meet, and to bring Paul before it. Something might then be elicited to make his path clear. The council met, and Paul, who had once, it is supposed, been a member of it, for the first and the last time in his life stood before it, yet not as a prisoner arraigned before that tribunal, for no charge had been formulated against him. Many who now looked on him must have known him in earlier years. Ex-high-priests, as Caiaphas and Theophilus,* were probably there, and doctors of the law, with whom, before his conversion, Paul had doubtless consulted. What a company to stand before, and what an occasion for them to see and hear the one whose name and whose course were well known to them all! But the purpose for which the council was summoned utterly failed to be realised. The chief captain could only gather that nothing worthy of death or of bonds could be brought against his prisoner. Questions of Jewish law were all that he could understand had caused the turmoil into which Jerusalem had been thrown; and even as to them there was not unanimity. For the council was divided. The Pharisees declared there was no evil in Paul; whilst the Sadducees, if they had had their way, would have killed him. Judicial calmness and even-handed justice, it became apparent, were absent from their proceedings. So as Paul's life was evidently in danger, the military, summoned by their commander, rescued him from his perilous position, and took him back to the castle.

On Paul's behaviour at this trying time some have commented in a manner not complimentary to the Apostle. The situation was unusual, and his circumstances were trying. He was there with no charge brought against him to which he was to plead. And when he said, and could say with truth, he had lived in all good conscience to that day,

* Before Caiaphas the Lord had stood, and by him had been judged guilty of blasphemy. From Theophilus the Apostle had solicited and obtained letters to Damascus to carry out his mission there.

the high priest Ananias ordered him to be struck on the mouth, a most unrighteous act, and, considering the circumstance we have mentioned, utterly indefensible. No wonder the Apostle's sense of the injustice stirred him up, and he answered the high priest, not knowing that he was the high priest, in a way he would not have done had he been consciously addressing that officer. And then, discerning the character of the assembly, he rallied the Pharisaic section to his side, by reminding all that his great offence in the eyes of the Sadducees consisted in upholding the doctrine of resurrection, which they systematically denied. We would, however, whilst thus noticing what the historian has told us, leave Paul in the hands of his Judge and ours, only remembering that he had been distinctly forbidden by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem at this time. It is no wonder, then, if his conduct on this occasion laid him open to animadversion. No one of us is perfect. But ere we pass strictures on him, let us be sure that we should have acted better ourselves.

Ananias.—A few words on Ananias the high priest. He was the son of Nebedæus, and had been nominated to the office by Herod Agrippa II., King of Chalcis. A chequered experience was his, having been, ere this, sent to Rome in bonds as a prisoner, after, for a time, enjoying the dignity of the high priesthood (Josephus, *Ant.*, XX. vi. 2). Acquitted, he returned to Jerusalem, and it would seem from Luke that he again discharged the functions of the high priesthood. Deposed from his office shortly after this, he ended his life in an ignominious way, assassinated by the *Sicarii*, who dragged him forth from an aqueduct in the pleasure grounds of Herod's palace, or prætorium, in Jerusalem, whither he had fled for safety. A more worthless person never, it is said, filled the office of high priest. How low had Judaism sunk! Paul's words came awfully true in the end of that arrogant man, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall"; whilst the

Apostle's regard for the office is put also on record. As high priest there was a respect due to him, which his personal character could never have claimed.

Divine Encouragement.—What must have been Paul's feelings during these two most harassing days? He had left Mnason's house, where he had lodged, on the previous morning, to attend, as he had done day by day, the Temple, with the four men the expenses of whose offerings he had undertaken to defray. He passed the next night a prisoner in the castle, after having narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Jews outside the sanctuary. He had addressed the multitude from the stairs leading to the castle, expecting, we may quite believe, that the story of his conversion would tell on them, and mitigate, if not subdue, their angry passions. But nothing is more cruel than religious hate.

How often have people since that day, who have felt in their own souls the power of the truth, expected that the recital of that which converted them must act in a similar way on others! How often have such been disappointed! Was Paul disappointed at the result? And was that all the testimony, he might ask himself, that he was to bear in Jerusalem? On the second day he had appeared before the Sanhedrin, and the council had broken up in disorder. But he remained a prisoner, though a prisoner against whom no charge had been preferred, or could be, of which the Roman authorities could take cognisance. The second day closed, and night overshadowed the earth. Paul was probably alone, certainly with no friendly Christian to encourage him, or to pray with him. And, till morning came, he could look for no acquaintances to visit him. Was he deserted? Was he forgotten? If friends could not reach him—and there were certainly some in the city who would gladly, if it had been possible, have shared in his captivity—there was One who did visit him that night, and to whom bolts, bars, and guards were no obstacle. "The Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer:

for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome" (xxiii. 11). How different was the Lord's estimate of Paul from that of the Jews! A witness for Christ in the Lord's eyes; a fellow unfit to live in those of the Jews.

Gracious indeed of the Lord was it to visit Paul. He had watched the whole proceeding. He was not unconcerned about His servant. The defence on the previous day from the stairs of the castle might seem to the Apostle to have been fruitless, since it had made no favourable impression on the crowd. Yet it was not service thrown away, strength expended for naught and in vain. Paul had borne witness to Christ in Jerusalem. That service was acceptable to the Lord. The Jews had heard that the Nazoræan was in heaven, that He had those on earth whom He regarded as part of Himself, and that He could show grace to those who had openly opposed Him by persecuting His saints. The Lord remembered all this, and approved of it. How the Apostle's heart must have been cheered! It was grace indeed, but grace to His failing servant. Were some inclined to call him rash in venturing to Jerusalem after so many and such distinct warnings? Certainly the One who might have reproached him is the One who did not; and the only one that we know who received a Divine communication that night was Paul the prisoner, separated from all his friends, and detained in the castle of Antonia. Honour should be put on him for whose death the Jews were so clamorous. "Not fit to live!" they cried out. A fitting vessel to bear witness for Christ in Rome, the Lord, in the silence of that night, announced to His servant and confessor. Well does He know the time and the way to encourage a servant, lest he should be cast down and crushed under the weight of circumstances. And Paul is not the only one, nor the last in point of time, who has proved this loving ministry of the Lord; his history also bears witness that no time

is out of season for such ministration, if circumstances call for it.

Divine Communications.—With what communications from the Lord had Paul been favoured! Spoken to outside Damascus, and learning that all his plans were known to Him whom he had regarded contemptuously as the Nazoræan, he received another communication, when in the Temple at Jerusalem, again disclosing how perfectly acquainted was the Lord with his desires, and this time for his countrymen's welfare. Guidance he received afresh. Then at Corinth, when in danger of discouragement, the Lord a third time communicated with him, and kept him in that city to labour for his Saviour. And now on a fourth occasion, but the second time at night, the Lord spoke to encourage His servant. If men might think his service in life was over, Paul should learn that there was yet more that he should be permitted to engage in. Gracious Master, how truly dost Thou care for and minister to Thine own!

Estimating Service.—What real work had Paul done in Jerusalem? He had not preached in any synagogue. He had not let his voice be heard in the Temple. Nobody, that we read of, had been converted, nor any unsaved impressed. No conscience was reached. No heart was even softened. Men are too often apt to judge by immediate results. If there are none, then all that has been done is pronounced of no use. Paul had addressed the multitude from the stairs, but it only excited still more their rage and opposition. Judged, then, by immediate results, it must be pronounced a failure. But was it a failure? Did the Lord so regard it? He did not. Very different, at times, is the Lord's estimate of service from that of man's. Paul had borne witness for Christ. It was not labour in vain. And by-and-by, when the yield of the harvest can be rightly estimated and openly displayed, that will be made apparent. Meanwhile, what encouragement for labourers

to remember that testimony for Christ is not forgotten by Him, nor thought little of, though at the time there may be no visible results! How many have been called to labour in the winter time, as it were, sowing the seed in anything but genial weather, or, it may be, but preparing the ground! Such labour may seem, in the eyes of the multitude, of little worth compared with the rich harvest which falls beneath the sickle of the reaper. Most men are apt to think of the reaper; little, often, of the sower. Yet, had not the sower been first at work, what fruit would there have been for the reaper to gather? That which the Lord told His disciples at Sychar we all do well to remember: "Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth: I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." Those to whom the Lord referred had very likely long passed away. They had wrought no deliverance on the earth, neither had the inhabitants of the world fallen (Isa. xxvi. 18). True service, nevertheless, had been theirs, though they had never seen the fields at Sychar white for harvest. And the Lord did not forget them; nor will He. So in other cases. Instead of hastily judging or depreciating the labours of others, let us wait for that time to judge when "the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together" (John iv. 36-38).

A Plot.—To return. Morning came, and with it most unexpectedly light on the path of Claudius Lysias. A company of Jews, upwards of forty in number, had bound themselves under a curse not to eat nor to drink till they had slain Paul. But in the chief captain's hands Paul was safe. How, then, should they carry out their purpose? The council was to ask the chief captain for a second examination; then, on Paul's road to the court, these Jews would waylay and kill him. What hatred to the truth this manifested! They could not confute the Apostle, so

they would kill him. And, what was worse, chief priests and elders, members of the council, were made privy to it. Those who should have set an example of impartial justice were ready to connive at this iniquity. What demoralisation there must have been among the members of the Sanhedrin, when any of them could lend an ear to such a proposition! But Paul's nephew, his sister's son, heard of it, and told him. Sent by the Apostle to Lysias, the young man revealed the plot. The chief captain thereupon took prompt measures, and sent away his prisoner that night to Cæsarea under a strong escort of soldiers, sending also a letter to Felix the governor, acquainting him with the fact that Paul was a Roman, and that nothing worthy of death or of bonds had been proved against him.

Thankful must Lysias have been when released from further responsibility in the matter. Thrice had he saved Paul's life. The first time was when he appeared so promptly on the scene, and rescued him from the hands of the infuriated mob. A second time he saved his life, when at his command the military carried off Paul from the council, lest he should have been torn in pieces by the Sadducean members of it. A third time he saved him, when he had sent him out of Jerusalem to Cæsarea under an armed escort. Lysias had done his duty. His name appears but once more in the narrative (xxiv. 22).

Paul had now left Jerusalem, perhaps for ever, certainly for years. His life at Cæsarea under detention will next come before us. Meanwhile, arriving in that city, he had completed the first stage of his journey to Rome.

XVIII.

PAUL AT CÆSAREA.

ACTS XXIII. 33—XXVI. 32.

ABOUT ten days had elapsed since Paul, bidding farewell to Philip the Evangelist and the Christian community at Cæsarea, had started for Jerusalem with Luke and others, as well as certain brethren who belonged to that city. Now he had returned to the political capital of the province, the seat of the Roman government, and escorted by cavalry. He had gone up to Jerusalem a free man. He returned a prisoner. But though his personal liberty was thereby denied him, power to minister the truth of God was still vouchsafed him, and opportunities for that service were not to be wholly lacking. Of magistrates and governors he had already had some experience. What provincial magistrates might do in defiance of righteousness he had learnt at Philippi. Before proconsuls he had also stood, first at Paphos, as the expounder of truth to the open ear of Sergius Paulus; then at Corinth, where Gallio refused to be the instrument of Jewish tyranny, in order to condemn one who had not broken any law of the Empire. Now of procurators in Judæa he was to have experience, first of Felix, and then of Porcius Festus.

On his arrival at Cæsarea he stood before Felix for the first time. It was but a short interview, and spent chiefly in the governor reading the letter of Claudius Lysias, and then asking Paul, in relation to his Roman citizenship we suppose, to what province he belonged. Learning it was

Cilicia, he promised attention to the matter when Paul's accusers should come. For Lysias, having remitted the case to Felix, his superior, had ordered the accusers to prosecute their suit before the procurator at Cæsarea.

Felix.—Of Felix we must now speak. Originally, like his brother Pallas, a slave, he had, in common with him, been purchased by Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius. Pallas was probably naturally the most gifted of the two brothers. Both set free, they after the death of Antonia attached themselves to the Emperor. Pallas got into high office in the Imperial household. Felix got advancement in the army. Through Pallas's influence with Agrippina, the fourth wife of Claudius Cæsar, his brother Felix, for services rendered by Pallas to the Jews, got nominated to the procuratorship of Judæa. Considering his origin and rise, we need not be surprised to learn that nobility of character was not one of his virtues. Self-interest, furthered by any means in his power, governed the man. So whatever stood in the way of that he was ready to sacrifice. Of this we have a sad example in the history of Jonathan, an ex-high-priest, at whose request it had been that Felix was nominated to his procuratorship. Felix therefore owed Jonathan much. Yet, because he ventured to remonstrate with the governor for his tyrannical ways, he was marked out for assassination. Felix corrupted Doras, a friend of Jonathan, to plot against the latter's life. This he did. And by the *Sicarii*,* or assassins, the ex-high-priest was killed, and no one was brought to justice for the murder.

* The *Sicarii*, Josephus writes (*Ant.*, XX. viii. 10), "made use of small swords, not much different in length from the Persian *acinacæ*, but somewhat crooked, and like the Roman *sicæ* [or sickles], as they were called; and from these weapons these robbers got their denomination, and with those weapons they slew a great many; for they mingled themselves among the multitude at their festivals, when they were come up in crowds from all parts to the city to worship God, as we said before, and easily slew those that they had a mind to slay."

Again. Practising dissimulation towards Eleazar, a notorious bandit though he was, in order to get him into his hands, he had no sooner secured him than he sent him bound in chains to Rome. Such wily planning may for a time succeed, but the one who thus acts forfeits the esteem and confidence of honourable men. No one admires or respects such a character. Eleazar had trusted to the governor's honour, and found to what a faithless man he had listened.

Then, too, nothing was to stand in Felix' way of gratifying his passions. So, through Simon the Magician,* he got Drusilla, the sister of Agrippa II., and wife of Azizus, King of Emesa, to forsake her husband, and to live with him. Azizus dying a short time after, perhaps of a broken heart, Drusilla became the wife of Felix. No wonder that Tacitus (*Hist.*, v. 9) in a well-known passage described him as one who "had the soul of a slave with the power of a sovereign, and exercised his power in all manner of cruelty and lust." Avarice, too, was a vice which characterised him. Bribes he would take, and bribes he sought (Acts xxiv. 26). On the other hand, he was not deficient in courage or decision. He had manifested that in dealing with banditti who had infested the province. So the compliment paid him by Tertullus (xxiv. 2, 3) had truth in it. Added to all this, he already had some knowledge of "the way," as Luke calls it, which made him the less ready to be swayed by the unsupported accusations of the Jews against Paul. Such was the man in whose hands, under God, Paul's life and person were for a time placed.

The Trial.—Five days went by, during which Paul was kept a prisoner in Herod's palace, or prætorium. At the end of that time Ananias, the high priest, appeared with

* This so-called magician was, Josephus tells us (*Ant.*, XX. vii. 2), a Jew, a Cypriot by birth. Some would identify him with Simon Magus of Acts viii. But if Justin Martyr is correct, that cannot be, for Simon Magus, he states, was a native of Samaria.

certain elders, we may presume those of the Sadducean party, in response to the charge of Lysias to present themselves before Felix. An orator accompanied them, one Tertullus, of mere local celebrity probably, to whom they trusted to present their cause in the most favourable light. Whether he was a Jew or a Roman the history does not intimate; for the words of the last clause of ver. 6 to the end of the first clause of ver. 8 of chap. xxiv. should probably be omitted. Did we retain that passage, it would indicate that he was a Jew, from the words "our law" (6). Omitting it, as seems more proper, his nationality is not declared. Evidently Ananias and the elders determined to use all efforts to crush Paul at this time, and so took down this orator with them to plead on their behalf. So far for the accusers.

What about the accused? No orator that we hear of volunteered to present his case in the most favourable light before the court. No one pleaded his cause. Was he deserted? Was he worse off for this? He had One with him unknown to Ananias, Tertullus, or Felix; and relying on His help and guidance, he could with perfect equanimity let the orator speak, and that necessarily first, assured that neither human eloquence, nor unblushing flattery, nor artful misrepresentation could really damage his defence. The Lord had told the disciples, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 18-20). This Paul, like Stephen before him, would now prove.

The Accusation.—Tertullus, as the prosecutor, now began to plead, but in the presence of the accused. With flattery, yet not unmixed with truth, the advocate com-

menced. Felix had acted against the robbers which had infested the province, and had in measure put them down. Now there was another matter in which he might, Tertullus would imply, profitably engage, and gain widespread popularity and the thanks of a grateful nation. The man, the defendant, was a pestilent fellow, so should of course be put down by the strong arm of the law. But more, he was a mover of seditions (or, insurrections) among all the Jews throughout the world. If robbers in the province had been put down, here was one whose influence and evil work extended throughout the Empire. So averred Tertullus. What an opportunity for Felix, then, to ingratiate himself with the whole province, and to deserve the thanks of the Emperor himself, for stopping, by the power with which he was entrusted, further seditions which the prisoner at the bar might otherwise stir up. An enemy of the nation! An enemy to the peace of the Empire! What a monster Paul must be! But not all had yet been stated that could be, and should be. He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazorœans; and last, but not least in the eyes of a Jew, he had profaned the Temple. Four definite counts, then, there were. 1st. He was a pestilent fellow. 2nd. He was a mover of seditions among all the Jews throughout the Roman Empire. 3rd. He was a ringleader of the Nazorœans. 4th. He had profaned the Temple. What the Jews would have put first—the profanation of the Temple, a grave crime, and one that by their regulations deserved death—Tertullus put last, placing in the foreground those other charges, which he expected would tell more on Felix. Would Felix show himself in this affair to be Cæsar's friend? Would he earn the thanks of the Jewish nation? Now was his opportunity to prove himself a worthy governor by dealing severely with Paul. Tertullus knew his man. But he did not know that God was behind it all, nor that Paul was yet to visit Rome; so all attempts of the Jews to compass his death would prove abortive.

Then was all that Tertullus had said really true? Was Paul under the cloak of religion such a pestilent fellow as the orator would wish to make out? Corroboration was required in support of the accusations. Corroboration was at hand. The Jews who came with Tertullus joined in setting on Paul. And now Felix, by examination of the prisoner in open court, could easily satisfy himself of the truth of the indictment. But more, the Jews had a grievance in this matter, which must be laid before the governor. This Tertullus now mentions. Condign punishment would have been meted out to the offender, now the prisoner at the bar, by those at Jerusalem. How that had been hindered Felix of course knew. So the Jewish advocate does not particularise it. In what different lights the same action can be presented! Lysias claimed merit for what he had done (xxiii. 27). The Jews regarded it as interference with their rights of apprehending and dealing with Paul. Yet they had no right to inflict the punishment of death without the sanction of the Roman authorities.

The Defence.—Tertullus had finished. The Jews there assembled had supported the allegations. It now came to Paul's turn to speak. An undefended prisoner, with not one solitary witness to testify in his favour, could he hope to escape conviction? Would the high priest and the elders have travelled from Jerusalem to Cæsarea to take up a trumpery case, or to engage in a doubtful contest? If they, with the orator, had appeared before Felix, the case must be one of real importance, and the conviction of the offender a public duty. So many might have reasoned. Was Paul abashed? Was he appalled at the task before him? At the sign from the governor that he was at liberty to speak, he began cheerily, and, we can add, confidently. "Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do cheerfully [we should read] answer for myself" (xxiv. 10). Felix had been procurator for about five years—a longer period of office than was

usually allotted to such provincial governors. He had, therefore, the more time to become acquainted with Jewish ecclesiastical matters than if he had but lately entered on his office. Evidently, too, as our historian informs us, he was not wholly ignorant of the rise and presence of Christianity in the very bosom of Judaism, and he may have had opportunities of learning that the Nazoræans, as Tertullus called them, were not so bad as their countrymen would paint them. Tertullus had complimented Felix when he began. Paul did not, though he gave the governor, and rightly, credit for some little acquaintance with such matters as engaged his attention that day. At once Paul plunged into the grave subjects of the indictment. "A pestilent fellow" Tertullus had called him. What had brought Paul to Jerusalem at that time? He came to bring alms to his own nation (17). Was that like a pestilent fellow? But twelve days, too, had elapsed since he had entered Jerusalem. What had he been doing there? Purifying himself according to the Mosaic ritual and worshipping God. A strange kind of pestilent fellow certainly!

Was he a seditious person, a fomenter of political disturbances among his countrymen? Neither in the Temple nor in the city had he attracted people round him. He was quietly waiting for the time to offer sacrifices, neither disputing in the Temple, nor in any synagogue, nor stirring up the people in the city. Moreover, this supposed mover of seditions among all the Jews in the Empire worshipped the God of their fathers, believing firmly in a resurrection of the just and of the unjust. Hence, with that in prospect, he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Was all that like a pestilent fellow, or a raiser of seditions? Openly and fearless of contradiction he could thus speak in the presence of Ananias and his company. And certainly no one on this occasion rose up before Felix and challenged the truthfulness of his statements.

But two other charges there were. To the one he pleaded guilty. He was a Christian. He was not ashamed of it. "After the manner which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (14). Now this grave offence, as it was in the eyes of a Jew, was none in Roman law. The other charge, that of profaning the Temple, was wholly untrue; and it was enough for Paul to comment, and justly, on the absence of any supposed witnesses of such an offence. That charge fell, therefore, to the ground. Certain Jews from Asia had made the accusation, but none of them were present to support it. Had Ananias secured the services of Tertullus, and forgotten to see that material witnesses should be forthcoming? Or did he not know that this accusation was untenable? As high priest it became him to vindicate the honour of the Temple, if Paul had polluted it.

Paul, in his turn, had finished. Felix clearly perceived that there was no ground for his condemnation; and very likely thinking to reap pecuniary profit out of the case, he deferred judgment till Lysias should come. This, it seems, never happened. The Jews, therefore, returned to Jerusalem discomfited, whilst Paul was still kept a prisoner at Cæsarea. Liberty, however, was allowed him to receive the visits of his friends who might minister to him.

Fresh Honours.—Two years thus passed. But fresh honours the Lord put on His servant. He had been allowed to bear testimony to Him in Jerusalem. He was now to be permitted to speak for Him at Cæsarea. There were Christians, as we know, at Cæsarea, and had been for years. And though Felix had been for five years or more resident in that town, he had never commanded, we may be sure, any of them to acquaint him with their tenets, or to let them preach to him. A Nazoræan preach at Cæsarea to a Roman! That would be strange. Yet it was true. For Paul, not for

Philip, or Luke, or Aristarchus, Felix sent. The prisoner in bonds should tell the governor of the grace of God, and of His love shown in giving His Son to die for the guilty and the lost. Felix sent for Paul. The movement and the desire were on the governor's part, and he heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus, as perhaps we should read. The gospel of God's grace was preached in the governor's palace, and to him directly. How many were present we know not; nor whether it was a strictly private interview, which perhaps is more probable, we cannot definitely say. Of two who were listeners we do, however, read—Felix and his wife (or, as perhaps Luke wrote, his own wife), for he had now married her. What a pair! What an occasion! Of Drusilla we have already made mention (p. 331). Now these two, open sinners as they had been, together listened to the stirring, burning words of Paul, in which righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come were subjects of which he treated, handled, we may be sure, by a master's hand, and under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Bold was Paul. Neither Tertullus nor Ananias would have dared thus to speak in the governor's presence. But Paul was bold. Yet it was not boldness springing from rashness. It was the boldness of the man who knew the Lord was on his side, and who was sure of the power of the Spirit. Felix felt, as doubtless he had never felt before, the power of the Word. Not that there was eloquence, which moved the feelings, and carried the listener away. But there was power in the Apostle's reasoning. Felix trembled. And well he might; for a coming judgment, when unrighteousness will be exposed and judged, is no soothing theme. And the thought of eternity for one unprepared is anything but exhilarating. He felt the awfulness of the judgment to come for one like him, guilty of unrighteousness, adultery, and avarice, if indeed his conscience could acquit him of the crime of murder. Was Drusilla alarmed? Was she too moved? About her the historian maintains silence.

But Felix was alarmed; he trembled. The preacher was in earnest; the address was powerful. The governor became afraid; he was terrified.

Very probably he never expected to hear such a solemn discourse, and never before had listened to one whose very words were like daggers penetrating his inmost soul. The rebukes of Jonathan, the ex-high-priest, had been as nothing compared with this. The words of the former enraged him. Those of the latter terrified him. Yet he did not resent them as an impertinence. He felt the force of what Paul had said, which, without charging Felix with any of his enormities, yet brought them to his remembrance, shown up in their true light. Conscience can speak, and when it does the individual must be silent. The past life of the governor rose up before him as the foreground of the picture of which judgment and eternity were the background, and all lit up with a lurid light. For the first time in his life Felix was in the light. But light, unless Divine grace is known and enjoyed, is too much for the responsible and guilty creature. To get away from it is the natural impulse. So he dismissed Paul, saying, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (xxiv. 25). Many a one had doubtless trembled before Felix as the governor. Felix now trembled at the words of Paul the prisoner.

But avarice still possessed him. Their last meeting had not taken place. He sent for him often, and communed with him; not that he desired salvation, but he wished for money to be offered, "that he might loose him." We say this, because, though the words we have quoted from ver. 26 are not found in the oldest uncials, they are quite in accord with the governor's known character. But Paul, we may be sure, at the different interviews which followed, neither spoke honeyed words, nor sought to curry favour with Drusilla, in order to procure his liberty. And Felix never got the smallest encouragement to hope that a

bribe would be forthcoming. Two full years passed. The governor and his prisoner were still in the same relative position to each other, when Felix was recalled. Now the time of retribution in this world might be for him at hand. To secure, then, the favour of the Jews he left Paul bound. Yet, like many another crafty plan, the object was defeated. Paul *was* left bound at Cæsarea. The Jews accused Felix at Rome. And it required all the influence of his brother Pallas with the Emperor Nero to shield the unrighteous governor from the consequences of his flagrant enormities.

Festus.—The new procurator arrived, Porcius Festus by name, a better man than his predecessor, and one who seemed to wish to act aright. The post, however, was doubtless a difficult one to fill successfully and with credit to himself. Naturally he would desire to keep on good terms with the Jews on the one hand. Then Paul, on the other, still in bonds, the procurator must take up and deal with the case righteously. That was man's side of the matter. But there was another. The Lord had suffered Paul to be left in bonds by Felix because He had still work for His servant at Cæsarea. Paul's matter, however, would be no longer vexatiously delayed.

Another Note of Time.—The arrival of Festus into the province gives us another, a third, date in the history of the Acts. Herod Agrippa I. died, as we have already stated, A.D. 44. Gallio's proconsulship, the next date furnished us by Luke, was in A.D. 53. Now Festus's supersession of Felix took place A.D. 60. About seven years, then, had rolled by since Paul's appearance at Corinth before the tribunal of Gallio. And since Paul had, under Felix, been two years in prison at Cæsarea, the Apostle's last visit to Jerusalem must have taken place in the year 58 A.D., five years after his first visit to the capital of Achaia. For three years of this period Paul was labouring uninterruptedly at Ephesus, leaving two years for his return to Antioch (xviii. 22), his passage through Asia Minor to

Ephesus, his three months' sojourn in Greece, and his last journey to Jerusalem.

Before Festus.—Three days after the governor's arrival at Cæsarea he went up to Jerusalem. Whilst there he was spoken to about the case. A new governor might be more pliant than the previous one. So the chief priests * and chiefs of the Jews approached Festus, and desired that he would have Paul brought to Jerusalem, and there tried, intending to waylay and kill him on the road. But God watched over His servant. Festus refused compliance with that request, answering, properly, that Paul should be tried at Cæsarea, his accusers, as many as were able, going down thither to prosecute.

Eight or ten days having passed—so the historian probably wrote—Festus returned to Cæsarea. On the following day, sitting on the judgment seat, Paul was brought before him. For the first time in his career the governor was made practically acquainted with one of the difficulties connected with that procuratorship. The laws of the Jews, professedly of Divine enactment, and consecrated by age, having been promulgated, as far as found in Scripture, centuries before Rome was founded, or the rise of the Babylonish power symbolised in Daniel ii. as the head of gold, those laws differed from heathen customs and Greek constitutions, as well as from Roman jurisprudence; so that a death penalty might be incurred under them, unknown to the statute-book of the Roman Empire. And now, brought face to face with this difficulty, what should Festus do?

The trial proceeded. Once more had the Apostle to

* "The *chief* priests," not *high* priest, is here the best-attested reading. Ishmael the son of Fabi was high priest at this juncture. Perhaps he felt, after Ananias' defeat, the folly of prosecuting further the matter, and so was not foremost in approaching the governor. Agrippa II. had deposed Ananias, and had appointed Ishmael to the office. How low had religion sunk among the Jews, when they quietly acquiesced in the civil power deposing and installing the high priests!

listen to many and grievous charges brought against him, none of which could be legally established. That was evident. And Paul, on answering, pressed that on his judge, saying, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended anything at all" (xxv. 8). Puzzled evidently as to what he should do was Porcius Festus. Unfounded charges were no grounds on which to punish any one in a Roman court of justice. Willing, however, to earn popularity with the Jews, he asked if Paul would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged before him. His question to Paul was a confession that he could not legally change the venue in that fashion. For that Paul's consent would be required. Would he give it? Paul knew better than Festus the risk of life that he would run, and answered the procurator at once: "I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. If then [so we should read] I be an offender, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar" (xxv. 10, 11). Paul could teach Festus his duty. The proper tribunal for a Roman citizen in that province was not Jerusalem, but Cæsarea. There was the seat of government, and there was the court of the representative of the Emperor. Would Festus wish to take the cause to Jerusalem, to be there tried before him? That was not the right way of dealing with a Roman. Paul thereupon claimed his privilege as a Roman. He appealed to Cæsar. The proposition just made by Festus brought matters to a point. "Hast thou appealed," he said, "unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go." Thenceforward Paul was kept in bonds till it should be convenient to send him with other prisoners to Rome. Meanwhile a further honour was to be put on him. The procurator, King Agrippa, Bernice, and all the chief officials of the Roman power in the province were to

hear from him of his conversion, and of the mission with which the Lord Jesus in glory had entrusted him—a mission that directly and blessedly concerned the Gentiles.

Agrippa and Bernice.—An appeal to the Emperor was the right of a Roman citizen, though a certain discretion was allowed the provincial governors to yield to or to withhold the privilege. In this case there was no ground for disallowing it, and Festus and his council were agreed on that point.

Now a new scene opens before us, consequent on the arrival at Cæsarea of King Agrippa and Bernice to salute the new procurator. Of these two we must speak.

Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa I., whose awful end is related in Acts xii. At the death of his father (A.D. 44), the Emperor Claudius, thinking him too young to succeed to all the territories that Herod Agrippa had recently received, appointed him King of Chalcis (A.D. 48 or 49). At the age of twenty-six he received from the Emperor an increase of territory, consequent on the death of his great-uncle Herod Philip. This included Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Batanea, and Abilene, which last had originally been ruled over by the tetrarch Lysanias (Luke iii. 1). On the accession of the Emperor Nero, Agrippa, who evidently played his cards well, received further extension of territory by the addition of the cities of Abila and Julias in Peræa, and of Tarichæa and Tiberias in Galilee. His residence was at Cæsarea Philippi. Besides this, he was invested with the prerogative of appointing the high priests, and with the wardenship of the Temple, and the disposition of the Corban, or sacred treasure.*

Bernice was his sister, and the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I., her youngest sister being the beautiful Drusilla, of whom we have already made mention. Of Bernice, morally, there is nothing good to report. She seems to have sunk lower than her sister Drusilla. She was

* Josephus, *Ant.*, XX. i. 3.

married three times, first to Marcus, next to her uncle Herod of Chalcis, then to Polemo II., king of part of Cilicia. Like her sisters Mariamne and Drusilla, she deserted her husband, King Polemo, and was at the time of this visit living with her brother Agrippa at Cæsarea Philippi; and if reports are true, and the lines of the Roman satirist Juvenal (*Sat.*, vi. 156) are correct, her relations with her brother must be described as incestuous. Infatuating men by her charms, she had that fatal gift of beauty, ensnaring indeed to the other sex, and which has blasted the character of not a few who have possessed it. And if Tacitus (*Hist.*, ii. 81) is correct, as referred to by Dean Alford, she was the mistress of Vespasian, and then (Suet., *Tit.*, c. 7) the mistress of Titus his son, who would, it is said, have married her, but the jealousy of the Romans forbade it. Such were the guests of Festus at Cæsarea.

To Festus the presence of Agrippa II. at this juncture must have seemed very opportune. He had to forward Paul to Rome, but knew not what to say about him to Nero. The questions that the Jews had raised he did not understand, and one great subject of contention seemed foolish to him. It was about, he said, one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive (xxv. 19). Could Agrippa help him in this matter? He, a Jew, was better able to understand the mind of his countrymen, and the cause of their open hostility to Paul. Of Paul, Agrippa had doubtless already heard. Now an opportunity thus unexpectedly occurred for him to see and hear the one who stirred up, as no other living person did, the intense hatred and malice of his countrymen. The matter introduced by Festus, Agrippa expressed his wish to hear that man. That desire could be easily gratified. "To-morrow," said Festus, "thou shalt hear him" (xxv. 22).

Before Agrippa.—The morrow came. And Agrippa and Bernice, with great pomp, with the chief captains, and with the principal men of the city, being assembled by

Festus in the hall of audience, Paul was brought in before them. We must remember that this was not a fresh trial, so we read not of a judgment seat, as in a previous verse of the chapter (6). It was an opportunity provided for Agrippa to hear the remarkable man, but a prisoner, whose case fairly puzzled the procurator. No accusers, therefore, were present, nor were they intended to be. To hear Paul was the object of the meeting (22); and probably to do Agrippa honour, the chief captains and principal men of the city were assembled. All present, and Paul before them, but bound, Festus briefly stated the object of the meeting, that, after examination had, he might have somewhat to write to the Emperor. Then Agrippa, addressing Paul, told him he was at liberty to speak for himself.

He began. At last he stood before one who was expert in all customs and questions that were among the Jews. So he craved a patient hearing.

Of his life before his conversion he first spoke. All at Jerusalem were acquainted with it. He had been a Pharisee, and now he stood to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto *our* fathers, he could say, addressing King Agrippa as a Jew. What that promise was, and consequently what the hope of it meant, the Apostle had stated in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (xiii. 32-34). Agrippa well knew to what Paul referred—the promise of a Saviour, and the deliverance of the nation under Him from their enemies (Luke i. 68-75.) The fulfilment, however, of the national expectation involved really the resurrection of the Deliverer. This Paul preached, and announced the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Why should resurrection be a stumbling-block? Is it incredible that God should (or, if God doth) raise the dead? (Acts xxvi. 8).

Then going on to narrate his course as a persecutor,* he

* Here we learn from his own lips what a time it had been. A persecutor of the Church of God was what indeed he had been

described the manner of his remarkable conversion. This was the second time that he narrated that history. Now on each occasion we get something not mentioned elsewhere. The Lord's words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," are really, as we previously stated (p. 122), only met with in this recital, and their meaning would be well understood by his audience, for the simile was not unknown to Greek and Roman writers. Then, too, we see how the Apostle, on these two occasions on which he recounted the history of the turning-point in his life, considered the audience which he was addressing. On the stairs at Jerusalem (xxii. 12-16) he puts Ananias forward, dwelling on the good report that he had of all the Jews in Damascus, and recounts more at length than Luke had done (ix. 17) what that good man said to him. On this occasion, addressing the Roman procurator, and in the presence and hearing of Roman officials, he makes known that which previously has not been mentioned—viz., the Lord's communication to him when on the ground, which marked out his special sphere of service to be among the Gentiles. How suited was this! Which of his audience would have felt an interest in the character borne by Ananias, or in the details of his visit to Paul? But which of the Gentiles in that hall of audience was not concerned really in the announcement of Divine grace to be offered to them? So here we read: "Rise, stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering [or perhaps, taking thee out] from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I [omitting, now] send thee, to

(1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13; Phil. iii. 6; 1 Tim. i. 13). And martyrdoms by his instrumentality were not unknown. Only of one do we read, that of Stephen; but the Apostle here intimates that his was not the only one by any means. How exceedingly mad had he been! All this made his sudden conversion the more remarkable.

open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (xxvi. 16-18). The moral condition of Gentiles stated—blind, in darkness, and under Satanic power; by the preaching of the Gospel eyes could be opened, to light could they be turned, and deliverance from the devil's thraldom could be effected and consciously known. Further, grace would be enjoyed—the grace of forgiveness of sins; and an inheritance be shared in, everlasting in duration (Heb. ix. 15), and limited in extent only by the confines of heaven and earth (Eph. i. 10-14).

Before this august assembly, the elite of the province, with the king, too, and his sister as listeners, Paul had the privilege and the honour of announcing the Divine purpose of ministering to men wholly unworthy of it everlasting blessing, but only in connection with the Lord Jesus—*i.e.*, by faith in Him (Acts xxvi. 18). Agrippa had watched the flowing tide at Rome to ingratiate himself with the Emperors Claudius and Nero, and was rewarded with territory over which he ruled as king. Small, however, very small, was his kingdom compared with that of the Emperor's; and poor in wealth was he compared with many who had borne on earth the title of king. Now he heard, and all the Romans assembled heard, of an inheritance in which they could have part, compared with which that of the Cæsars was as nothing. Transient, too, was the possession of the Imperial throne. Everlasting was the inheritance to which Paul referred. What blessings for Gentiles to hear about, and to know of being within their reach!

Charged, then, with such a message, received in such a way, and from such a Person as the Lord, the crucified One, but now in glory, what could Paul do but spread it abroad? This he had done, insisting on Jews and on Gentiles repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance—*i.e.*, worthy of it. For this, he told Agrippa, the Jews

seized him in the Temple, and sought to kill him. Would he renounce his line of ministry in consequence? Agrippa shall hear: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which both the prophets and Moses did say should come: that the Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and [or better, that He first by resurrection of the dead] should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (xxvi. 22, 23).

Upon this Festus, who had listened, and, we may believe, earnestly, interposed, saying in a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (24). To him, a heathen, the doctrine of the resurrection seemed, as it did to philosophers at Athens (xvii. 32), but arrant folly. At once the Apostle replied, "I am not mad, most noble [or, most excellent] Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (xxvi. 25); and referred him to Agrippa, who could confirm what he, Paul, had just declared. Then turning abruptly to Agrippa, and addressing him, he said, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Confirmation of the Apostle's teaching was found in the prophets. Agrippa, as a Jew, professed to believe them. If he did, how could he stand out against Christianity, resisting the proved fulfilment in the life and death of the Lord of that which they had written? Thus suddenly appealed to, and so publicly, and put thereby into a corner, as we should say, the king evidently felt himself in a difficult position, and replied, either in jest or in irony, as it appears, "With but little* persuasion, thou wouldest

* This is a more correct translation of the original. "Almost" of the Authorised Version, it is generally agreed, does not represent the meaning of Agrippa. Were that translation admissible, it might convey the thought that the king was in earnest. The rendering above, which is that of the Revised Version, gives ground to believe that he spoke in irony, or in jest.

fain make me a Christian" (28). Did Paul think that he could be so easily turned round, and enroll himself amongst the despised and hated company of the Christians? Paul had allowed himself to be suddenly turned round. Did he think that he, the king, could be so easily moved? Did the king then by his retort veil the embarrassment in which the Apostle's appeal had put him? It looks like it. Paul replied, taking up the expression used by Agrippa. He had nothing to conceal, nothing of which he was ashamed. So he openly expressed his desire. "I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds" (29).

A fine answer, which, whatever effect it had on any of the company, has called forth the unqualified admiration of many and many a reader since that time. What had Paul suffered? What was he then suffering, deprived of his liberty, and attacked as he had been as a malefactor? What might he yet suffer? Did he then envy those around him, seemingly more fortunate than himself? Did he envy the worldly success and advancement of the king, and his continued enjoyment of Imperial favours? Would he exchange his lot for that of Agrippa's? We know he would not. Yet he had a wish, an earnest desire. For whom? For himself? No, but for others, even for every unconverted person in that hall. What was it? He tells them. That they might be as he was, his bonds excepted. Happy Paul, we may indeed say. The love of God and the love of Christ he enjoyed, of which the great ones before him knew nothing. He had, too, a home in which they had no part, and a future to which they could not look forward, and such as they had never conceived. He knew, too, the ground he was on before God, standing on the accepted sacrifice. The procurator's duration of power was limited. The reign of Agrippa, however prolonged, could not last for ever. Bernice's fascinating powers must decline.

But Paul would in time be with Christ on high, and find his home in the Father's house—a home made ready for him by the Lord Jesus Christ, with whom he will reign for ever and ever. What could earth provide to equal this? What could an Emperor bestow, or even enjoy, to rival it?

Agrippa now rose, not wishing to prolong the interview. With him rose Festus, Bernice, and all the chief men there present. Then conferring apart, they unanimously agreed that Paul was innocent of any crime of which the law that they had to administer took cognisance. And Agrippa further ventured the remark, that it was only Paul's appeal to the Emperor which stood in the way of his immediate liberation. What was Festus, then, to write? What did he write? Who now can say?

The Apostle's innocence was established. Lysias had arrived at that conclusion, after hearing what the Sanhedrin had to say against him (xxiii. 29). Felix, too, tacitly confessed it, when, giving orders to the centurion to detain him in custody till the coming of Lysias, he allowed him indulgence, as well as the privilege of seeing his friends and of being ministered to by them. And now Festus, Agrippa, and the governor's council all agreed in declaring his innocence. Not one who had legal jurisdiction over him but was convinced of the groundlessness of the charges persistently urged by the Jews. But more. Throughout his detention at Cæsarea the moral superiority of Paul shines out most clearly. Before Felix the prisoner and the governor had virtually changed places. The prisoner it was who advocated righteousness and temperance, and all that in view of a coming judgment. The governor had grossly violated the principles which one in his position ought to have practised, as well as upheld. And Paul by his powerful address made Felix tremble. The latter must have felt, and inwardly owned, that the former was immeasurably his superior. The thought of a coming

judgment, at which Felix was terrified, Paul could face with equanimity; for, justified by faith, we have peace with God (Rom. v. 1). Then as to Festus and Agrippa. What moral greatness was displayed in that answer to Agrippa! He knew whom he believed, and was persuaded that He was able to keep that which the Apostle had committed unto Him against that day (2 Tim. i. 12). A prisoner he might be, his liberty thus curtailed; persecution, too, he had suffered; and martyrdom might end his course: yet with all that he was better off than the officials before whom he stood. He had what they had not, yet nothing that they might not come to share in with him, if they turned to the Saviour of sinners. Paul's position of acceptance before God, and the future in store for him, he desired for each one of them who would have it. Before Felix he stands as a preacher of righteousness. Before Festus and Agrippa he appears as the possessor of blessing, which far outweighed all that earth could provide or human favour could bestow.

Taken Out.—We must now notice some points in his defence, or suggested by it. First, he was *taken out*, rather than delivered, from the people—*i.e.*, Israel—and *from* the Gentiles (Acts xxvi. 17). Called out for heaven, and one of the Church of God, he was, as 1 Cor. x. 32 teaches, distinct from Jews and Gentiles, apart from both. In this all Christians share, forming that third class on earth of which that passage just referred to speaks. An interesting point this is, and has for those who understand it important results. The Church is something distinct from anything before known. The Church is no development of Judaism. It is something wholly different from it. Judaising teaching has no place in it really.

The Twelve Tribes.—Next we are reminded by his address of the unbroken unity before God of the twelve tribes of Israel. Since the days of Rehoboam they had been divided. Yet Elijah viewed them as a whole before

God, erecting his altar on Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 31) of twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes. Captivity overtook the ten before Nebuchadnezzar carried captive the kingdom of Judah. To this day the ten have never returned, though they will, as Ezekiel (xx. 38-42) teaches us; and they will be again united under David their king (Ezek. xxxvii. 19-28). So after the return of the remnant from Babylon, the little company gathered together at Jerusalem did not forget the rest of their brethren. For they offered on the day of the dedication of the house a sin-offering for *all* Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel (Ezra vi. 17). Little likelihood of the nation's restoration, some might have thought. Such was not the view of faith, which Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the returned remnant had learnt to cherish. At all times and under all circumstances the people learnt to view them as a whole before God, and that from the days of Moses downwards. In the tabernacle this was symbolised during the dark hours of the night, as the light from the candlestick shone on the golden table, and on the twelve loaves of shewbread thereon. Of the twelve tribes James writes (James i. 1). To the twelve tribes Paul, as we have seen, referred as presently existing (Acts xxvi. 7). By-and-by it will be seen where they are on earth, when they emerge from their condition of dry bones, coming forth from their graves, and entering the land of Israel (Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12). Nor on high will heavenly saints forget them, for their names will be enduringly written on the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 12).

In the days, then, of Israel's apostasy under Ahab, Elijah, as we see, proclaimed the unbroken unity of the twelve. In the days of the nation's weakness the returned remnant thought of the whole nation. In Christian times James recognised their continued existence (James i. 1), and Paul confessed his belief in their final restoration and blessing

under their Messiah in accordance with the prophetic word (Isa. xi. 11-16). The elect nation can never perish.

Ministry to Israel.—We have noticed two points arising out of the Apostle's address. To a third let us briefly draw attention. In chapter xx. we have, stated by Paul himself, the chief subjects of his ministry. In our present chapter (xxvi. 22) we learn of the great use he made of the prophetic Scriptures. As he commenced (ix. 22), so he evidently went on. To them he turned his countrymen, and showed, with what blessed results to many, that the Lord Jesus Christ must be the One of whom Moses and the prophets did write, thus settling their faith on Christ in the written word of God. How Peter appealed to the Old Testament his sermon on the day of Pentecost bears witness. How Paul used that portion of revelation, then the only written revelation, his address at Antioch in Pisidia illustrates, and the Epistle to the Hebrews abundantly confirms. It was of course a new line of things, but quite in keeping with the mind of the Spirit in the Apostle's day, to open up the Old Testament Scriptures, and to show how the crucified One really answered to the inspired descriptions of Him who was to come. Christian teaching, whilst it unfolds much that was then new and distinctively characteristic of this dispensation, opens up also the Old Testament, and furnishes the only key, even Christ, to unlock that which before He came was as a sealed book oftentimes to the prophets themselves (1 Peter i. 10-12). Of the Old Testament both Peter and Paul made much use.

A Coincidence.—Agrippa and Bernice were now in the city in which their father had died about fifteen years before, smitten manifestly by the hand of God, through the instrumentality of an angel, shortly after that he had killed James by the sword, and had attempted, in order to please the Jews, to put Peter also to death. Now his son and daughter, finding themselves at Cæsarea, had the

opportunity of hearing the great champion of Christianity —the Apostle Paul. Where death had visited their father, life, everlasting life, was put within their reach, had they desired it. He who made Felix tremble could have spoken words of life to them, if they had been willing. What an opportunity was theirs! Agrippa was unwilling to be convinced. Of Bernice we read nothing. The opportunity passed away then unimproved, and as far as we know never to return. The memories of the past might well have made them thoughtful, had not the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things stood in the way. And in time the brother and sister passed away. Familiar with courtly circles on earth, if they died unconverted, they will never reign with Christ, nor behold this earth basking in the sunshine of His presence. With the glitter of earthly pomp they were well acquainted. The glorious day of the Lord's return they will never behold.

Women.—We have called attention (p. 280) to the men noticed in the Acts as serving in the work. Ere closing this part of the book we would remind the reader of women whose names will never be forgotten, as Tabitha of Joppa, Mary the mother of John Mark of Jerusalem, Lydia of Thyatira who dwelt at Philippi, and Priscilla the wife of Aquila. To these we would add Damaris of Athens, and one not mentioned in the Acts, but connected with its history, Phœbe of Cenchrea. Tabitha made garments for the poor (ix. 39). Mary at Jerusalem opened her house for prayer on the night of Peter's miraculous release (xii.). Lydia persuaded Paul and his company to make her abode their home whilst staying at Philippi (xvi.). Priscilla with Aquila received Paul under their roof at Corinth, helped Apollos to a better understanding of grace and truth (xviii.), and cheerfully, surely, prepared their house for a company of Christians to meet in week after week to show the Lord's death. Of Damaris we know nothing but that she identified herself with Paul at Athens (xvii. 34). Of

Phœbe we learn elsewhere that she had been a succourer of many, and of Paul also (Rom. xvi. 2). All these have honourable mention in Scripture. Moving most of them probably in quiet spheres of life, they did what they could; and with womanly tact and intuition, as well as Christian love, they ministered as opportunity was afforded; and the Holy Ghost has placed on record the distinctive character of their services. How different do these shine out compared with Drusilla and Bernice! Self, the love of influence and of admiration, to say nothing more, were guiding principles with the latter. Unostentatious yet true service for God and for Christ was the aim and desire of the former.

XIX.

THE VOYAGE TO ITALY AND ARRIVAL AT ROME.

ACTS XXVII. 1—XXVIII. 31.

TO Rome the procurator sent Paul for the hearing of the Emperor Nero. At Rome the Lord had previously determined that he should bear witness to his Saviour. The Roman saints he himself had long wished to see; and, if allowed, would, when present, impart unto them some spiritual gift, that they might be established (Rom. i. 11). Roman law necessitated his transmission to the capital. Divine purposes would be furthered by his presence there. Cherished desires of his heart would also be fulfilled. Paul, then, was not going against his will, though under circumstances which he had not originally foreseen. Of travel by land and by sea the great Apostle already had much and varied experience (2 Cor. xi. 25, 26). Yet possibly he had never been in two such large vessels, as conveyed him, the one from Myra to Melita, and the other from Melita to Puteoli. The corn ships of Alexandria were anything but cockle-shells. Certainly, too, he had never made so long a voyage free of charge.

Sidon, Myra, Fair Havens, Melita, Syracuse, and Rhegium, these were the places at which they stopped, the stages on their journey between Cæsarea, the port of embarkation, and Puteoli, near Naples, where they finally disembarked, to journey by land, and perhaps partly by canal also, onward to the capital.

Sidon.—Of Sidon we have had no direct mention previously in the Acts. At Tyre Paul had landed on his last journey to Jerusalem; and during the week's sojourn there, whilst the vessel was preparing to proceed to Ptolemais, a distinct communication, as we have seen (xxi. 4), by the Spirit had forbidden Paul's contemplated visit to the capital. Now in the custody of the centurion Julius, Paul may have seen from the vessel the city and harbour of Tyre, and that spot on the shore where all the Christians, men, women, and children, had knelt in prayer with him and his company ere the latter re-embarked for Ptolemais. But Tyre on this occasion was not to be revisited, not being a port of call appointed for this vessel of Adramyttium, which was bound for Myra in Lycia.

From Cæsarea they sailed. Luke is now again with Paul, as the first person plural "we" indicates. Aristarchus, a Macedonian, was also with them, and perhaps homeward bound, so would part company at Myra, where they were transferred to a vessel sailing directly for Italy. Luke, however, continued with Paul, and they entered the gates of the Eternal City together. Starting from Cæsarea, they went straight along by the coast northward to Sidon, which they reached the next day, covering in that space of time the first sixty-seven geographical miles of their voyage. In this very ancient, if, indeed, not the most ancient of the cities of Phœnicia, there were Christians. And Paul, who had evidently special indulgence, was allowed to go on shore to refresh himself with their company. Probably he had visited Sidon on more than one occasion in past years, when travelling between Jerusalem and Antioch; and we may well believe that when, in company with Barnabas, he went through Phœnicia and Samaria, announcing the conversion of the Gentiles (xv. 3), Sidon was not passed by without a visit from the travellers. Be that as it may, Paul evidently was acquainted with some of the Christians in Great Sidon, as it was once called (Josh. xi. 8, xix. 28).

This city, named probably after Sidon, the eldest son of Canaan, and therefore a great-grandson of Noah, gave its name to the people of Phœnicia, who are called in consequence in Scripture Sidonians (Deut. iii. 9; Josh. xiii. 4, 6), but never Tyrians; for Tyre, the prophet Isaiah teaches us, was a daughter of Sidon (Isa. xxiii. 12). Figuring though it does in prophecy, the mother city is not, however, so prominently the object of Divine denunciation as her more wealthy and more renowned daughter Tyre, nor has she sunk so low.

We subjoin an extract from an eyewitness describing the present appearance of the two. Of Tyre he first writes: "New Tyre is now represented by a poor village. The ancient 'mistress of the seas' can only boast of a few fishing-boats. The modern houses of a better class have had their walls so shattered by earthquakes that the inhabitants have deserted them; and the modern ramparts are so ruinous that I went in and out over them in several places." Of Sidon he writes: "The aspect of Tyre is bleak and bare, but that of Sidon rich and blooming. In fact, it is one of the most picturesque towns in Syria. It stands on a low hill which juts out into the Mediterranean, and is defended by old but picturesque walls and towers. On a rocky islet, connected with the city by a broken bridge, is a ruined castle, once the defence of the harbour. The ancient architectural remains about Sidon are few—some marble and granite columns, some pieces of mosaic pavement, and some fragments of sculptured cornice. But the tombs are interesting. They dot the plain and the mountain side beyond, and have already yielded a rich harvest to the antiquary—Phœnician sarcophagi, Greek coins, funeral ornaments, and crystal vases. They would still repay a fuller inspection. The gardens and orchards of Sidon are charming. Oranges, lemons, citrons, bananas, and palms grow luxuriantly, and give the environs of the old city a look of eternal spring. Sidon is one of the few spots in Syria

where Nature's luxuriance has triumphed over neglect and ruin, and where a few relics of ancient prosperity still remain in street, and mart, and harbour. It is instructive to compare Tyre and Sidon. The former far outstripped the latter in grandeur, wealth, and power, but its history has been briefer and more momentous. Once and again the tide of war swept over Tyre, first leaving the *old* city desolate, and then the *new* in ruins. Sidon has been more fortunate, or perhaps I should say less unfortunate. The tide of war swept over it too, but the wave was not so destructive." *

Leaving Sidon, now known as Saida, their next port of call was Myra, a city of Lycia, which lay a little off the coast, about two and a half miles up the river Andriacus. Their direct course would have been to have passed to the south of Cyprus, and then to steer straight for it. But the wind being contrary, on which as a sailing vessel they were very much dependent, and of course could not go directly against, they had to coast along the northern side of Cyprus, under its lee, to accomplish their purpose. On the last occasion that Paul was at sea in these parts, going then from Patara to Tyre, the wind favoured their taking the direct course, leaving Cyprus, as Luke states, on their left hand (xxi. 3). On the present voyage, meeting with adverse winds, they had to seek the shelter of the island from the force of the wind, if they were to make any way.†

Arriving at Myra, the centurion found a ship of Alexandria bound for Italy. This decided him, we may suppose, to venture on the long sea route, in preference to going farther in their present vessel; and then crossing to Macedonia, to travel on the *Via Egnatia* to the Adriatic,

* Porter's *Giant Cities of Bashan*, pp. 274, 275.

† " *We sailed under Cyprus*, so that we remained near the shore (elevated above the level of the sea), because the shifting winds were contrary, and therefore made a withdrawal to a distance from the (northern) shore not advisable" (Meyer).

by which they would have landed at Brundusium, now Brindisi. What determined their way, except it was the apparent fortuitous circumstance of a vessel sailing direct for Italy, we are not able now to settle. But God's hand was in it, and we can see it. Paul was to stand forth as God's chosen servant before all, and Malta was to have blessing through sick ones being healed.

Transferred to this vessel, a large one, for it finally contained two hundred and seventy-six souls, its size or name unknown to us, they set sail, bound for no port short of the Italian peninsula, or perhaps Syracuse on their way. Again, and more persistently than before, they experienced delays, owing to contrary winds. With difficulty, and after many days, arriving opposite to Cnidus, a city of Caria, about a hundred and thirty geographical miles from Myra, it became evident that a straight course was out of the question. For the coast here trending towards the north, they would now be brought face to face with the wind, without any shelter, as hitherto, from the land on their right. A complete diversion was therefore determined on, and they steered south, till, passing Cape Salmone, the eastern point of Crete, they could coast along the south side of that island. By the time they would reach its western extremity, they might hope that the Etesian winds, which had blown for an unusual length of time that year, might subside, and a more favourable wind waft them on their way. The wind did change before they cleared the western end of the island. In that they had not miscalculated. Was it more favourable for the ship?

Fair Havens.—We have mentioned the Etesian winds. They blew from the north-west, and generally beginning in July, stopped with the close of the month of August. But this year they had far exceeded their accustomed duration, and the difficulty which they had experienced between Myra and Cnidus beset them still, as they endeavoured to make their way along the south of Crete. With difficulty, we

read, they reached the Fair Havens (xxvii. 8), near to which was the city of Lasæa. Here for the present further progress was stayed, the north-west wind making it impossible to proceed. The season was advancing. The fast of the day of atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, was past. Autumnal storms, if not wintry weather, must be looked for. To reach Italy that season was hopeless. The pressing question then arose, Where should they winter? To launch out beyond Crete no one thought of. Nautical experience of that day, with only the appliances that they had, forbade such a rash venture. Where, then, on that island should they find a safe winter anchorage? The Fair Havens had not such a reputation. And one on board, the owner, if he only, had an interest in preserving the ship and its cargo. They might of course risk wintering where they now were. But would that be wise? The question was evidently debated, and, it would seem, openly. The master and the owner, with most of those on board, advised, if possible, to work their way on to Phœnice, or Phœnix, and there winter. That had a harbour looking towards the north-east and the south-east, having an island in front called Aradus. Those acquainted with navigation counselled that. But one voice was against it—a voice now heard for the first time in giving an opinion on this important matter. That voice was Paul's.

How the master, and the owner also, pressed their view Luke has not related. What Paul said he has preserved, for it bears on the future history of this voyage. "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives" (10). Who was he to give such a decided opinion, opposed to that of the master, who ought to know, and to that of the owner, who must have had great pecuniary interest in the preservation of his vessel? A prisoner on his way to the Emperor's judgment seat ventured his opinion against all the rest! He had, we subsequently

learn in verse 21, distinctly intimated that they should not leave the anchorage where they now were. Yet no wonder that the centurion inclined to the advice of seamen rather than to that tendered by Paul. Soon, however, all would have to own the wisdom of Paul's advice, whilst the owner would live to regret that his own views had been listened to, and he and all, the master included, would come to put implicit confidence in whatever the prisoner might say. Was not God, by the Etesian winds, bringing His servant into prominence, and about to show to all in that vessel what a blessed thing it was to have Paul on board? To Phœnice (or better, Phœnix), so named from its palm trees, they were determined to go, and only waited for a favourable wind to start.

The north-west wind ceased. A south wind sprang up. The anchor was weighed, and they hoped that they had gained their point, and that their patience would be rewarded. They set sail, not anticipating any storm; for their boat was towed, instead of being on board. It was but a short run. Phœnix would soon be reached. No need to trouble to hoist up the boat. Lulled into security, they left Fair Havens. The desired anchorage they never reached. A tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon [or, as we should read more probably, Euraquilo], typhonic in character, swept down from Mount Ida, and caught the ship. The north-west wind had been harassing. The north-east was far worse. It drove them along. To reach Phœnix was out of the question. To run under Cauda,* a small island south of Crete, was their resource. Under its lee they managed to secure the boat, and to undergird the ship. To Crete they had now bidden farewell. In the open sea, with no land in sight after leaving Cauda, the modern Gozzo, they felt themselves at the mercy of the

* Cauda very probably was the original reading, not Clauda. And Euraquilo has certainly the preponderance of Uncial MS. authority in its favour.

winds and waves. All precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the vessel, fearing lest they might be driven on to the dreaded quicksands called Syrtis Major, off the coast of Africa. Sail was struck, and they were driven. The vessel laboured. The tempest tossed them about. They lightened the ship, throwing overboard freight. That not enough, on the next day they (not, we) threw out the tackling of the ship. The tempest continued. They could do no more. Alone in that raging sea, with a boisterous wind, no friendly soul near, they could only resign themselves to their fate. Death stared them in the face. Hope of being saved was lost. The Fates were against them, the superstitious on board might exclaim. Jupiter was angry with them, others might think. Neptune was determined to engulf them in the turbulent waters, the sailors might say. God was watching over them, Paul could have told them. There was One, as it were, at the helm. There was an eye looking down on them from above, and guiding them steadily and directly to the land that they were first to reach. For if the reader will consult a good map, he will see that the run from Cauda to Melita was as straight a course as could be. *Steadily*, too, we have said. Because it is stated, on apparently good authority, that the time they passed between Cauda and Melita, just a fortnight, is about what a vessel drifting would in the present day take to reach the latter island. The vessel struck at length on the first land which in their straight run from Cauda west they would reach. Was not God, as it were, at the helm? But ere they reached Melita angelic ministry was in exercise on their behalf.

A Heavenly Communication.—Many days had passed, and neither sun nor stars appeared; the tempest continued; so hope of safety had fallen to almost the vanishing-point, when again the prisoner's voice was heard. For Paul stood forth in the midst of the fasting company, and spoke as follows: "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not

have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss" (xxvii. 21). Paul had been right after all. What use, however, would it have been in such circumstances to have forced on them all simply a recognition of that? It might have enhanced their judgment of Paul's perceptive powers, but it would have comforted none of them. And he certainly would have been the last person to parade himself before his fellows simply as one who could form a better judgment than they. Day after day had they been tossed about at the mercy of the elements, drifting in Adria. Fourteen days of that must have pretty well worn them out, what with anxiety, want of food, and doubtless lack of rest. Now he had a more encouraging communication to make. Of life he could speak, not of death. So he proceeded: "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship" (20). They had been expecting nothing but death. He spoke with certainty of the preservation of their lives. Cheering words indeed, if true. But how could he promise that? No land was in sight. No succour was seen at hand. No abatement, it would seem, of the tempest. No rift in the clouds had let them see once more the face of the sun, nor could they scan the heavens to recognise well-known stars. Was he mocking them? He will explain. "There stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island" (23-26).

"Be of good cheer," he said, and repeated it. He was God's servant. And his God, the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, had spoken by His angel; and Paul implicitly believed Him. In the midst of the sea of Adria

God knew where Paul was, and thus communicated with him. Hopeless had the crew deemed their position. Helplessly drifting about at the mercy of the elements and of the currents in the sea, they were powerless. God, however, knew the very spot where they were; and an angel, unknown to them, had actually stood on board that night. The owner saw him not. The centurion was unaware of his presence. Even Luke had not perceived that he was near. But Paul saw him and heard him. The God of heaven had a message for that prisoner in the storm and in that vessel. Paul must go to Rome. The vessel, therefore, could not founder in the open sea with all on board. Further, no life would be lost; for God had given to that prisoner, as they regarded him, the owner, the centurion, the soldiers, the prisoners, and the crew. Could that be true? A sign was forthcoming. "We must be cast," said Paul, "on a certain island."

The Last Night.—But where was the island? and what was its name? No one on board then knew, nor had the angel said. At midnight, however—and that night was a dark one—the practised ears of the sailors detected that land was near. They very likely heard the noise of distant breakers. Yet none could see against what they were dashing. Were Paul's words really coming true? Had they neared the unnamed island? By sounding they discovered that the water was twenty fathoms deep. Sounding soon after, the depth had decreased. It was now only fifteen fathoms to the bottom. Evidently rapidly approaching some shore, they deemed it prudent to anchor, and to await for the day. So casting out four anchors from the stern, which would speedily arrest the onward progress of the vessel, they would avoid the danger of running aground in the dark. The sailors now attempted, by means of the boat, to save themselves, intending to desert in the hour of peril the rest on board. So they launched it under pretence of casting out anchors from the foreship. A word

from Paul unmasked their design to the centurion. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (31). At once the soldiers cut the ropes, and let the boat go adrift. The centurion had evidently some authority on board. And the Apostle had acquired a well-deserved influence over him and the soldiers. They listened now to him.

The Last Meal.—For the day they all waited. Sleep, doubtless, was banished from every one that night. Again Paul spoke. Each one would have shortly to put forth efforts to reach the shore. But worn out and famishing men are not in the best condition to make extra exertions. So the cheery voice of the Apostle was heard calling them all to partake of food. Paul seemed in command now. It was his word which made the soldiers cut adrift the boat. It was his voice which was now summoning all on board to eat. But eat in earshot of breakers? Eat with shipwreck imminent? Eat at such a time of intense anxiety? Yes. "This day," he said, "is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health [or rather, safety]: for there shall not a hair fall [rather, perish] from the head of any of you" (33, 34). But who would begin? Who would set the example? Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all. When he had broken it, he began to eat. Encouraged by his example, all were of good cheer, and took some food, and were refreshed. They all eat of it together—prisoners, crew, centurion, and master. It was their last meal on board, but not just the prelude to death. Death was not before them, for not a hair of their head should perish. Not a few, doubtless, since that day have partaken of their last meal on board their vessel, with the consciousness that they would never reach land, but be engulfed in the yawning sea around them. How differently situated were those in that vessel, and what a companion was Paul, the guide, the comforter, of them all in those

trying circumstances! What blessing to have him in their midst!

The Shipwreck.—All cheered, refreshed, and reinvigorated, measures were now to be taken to run the vessel on shore, if possible. The boat adrift, to beach the ship seemed a natural and proper course. For this they lightened it, and cast out what remained of the cargo of wheat into the sea, in readiness for further steps to be taken, when by the light of day they should discover exactly their position. The day eagerly desired at length dawned, and they then could perceive a certain creek or bay, with a beach, a smooth shore or strand, just in front of them. To run the vessel on that was their desire, and the best thing they could do. So casting off the anchors, as Luke wrote, they left them in the sea, having no more use for them. Then loosing the rudder bands, and hoisting the foresail (not, mainsail) to the wind, they made for that spot. Impelled by the wind, the vessel moved forward to it; and the forepart having struck, and remained immovable, they discovered that two seas there met; for what seemed part of the mainland on the right was in reality a little island, now called Salmonetta. Hence it was that, while the forepart of the vessel stuck fast in the tenacious mud, the hinder part was beaten by the violence of the waves, which came through the narrow passage of about a hundred yards wide between Salmonetta and Malta.

But a new danger threatened Paul, to be promptly, however, averted by the centurion. If the prisoners were unchained to reach land they might escape, and their guards would be punished for want of care. The soldiers therefore, to save themselves, counselled to put the prisoners to death. To carry out that purpose would have involved Paul in the slaughter—Paul who had been so helpful and encouraging. The centurion therefore negatived the proposition for Paul's sake. So a second time, because of Paul, the prisoners were preserved from death. And now

at the command of the centurion they all left the ship, and got on shore each as best he could. Those who could swim were to precede the rest, who on planks or some other pieces of the vessel got through the surf and reached the land. It seems to have all been done in a very orderly way; no demoralisation is hinted at. Probably Paul's presence and calmness throughout conduced to that at the end. "There shall be no loss of life among you," Paul had declared (22). "There shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you" (34), he had that very morning promised. It all came true. The island was reached, and the muster-roll could be called over, to find no one missing of the company which had left the Fair Havens. What a thing it was to have been thus linked with Paul! All, given by God to him, were saved from shipwreck. And we can say that all given by God to Christ will certainly be saved. The gifts of God are without repentance.

How remarkably had Paul been brought forward by God in this voyage! A prisoner on his way to Rome, chained, we presume, to soldiers, who would have thought about him? His first advice disregarded, the master learnt by experience the folly of his own. When encouragement was needed, Paul gave it, and announced the gift to himself from God of all on the vessel (24). When direction was required, Paul furnished it (31). When the last meal on board was to be taken, Paul summoned them to it (34), and so they were strengthened for the work before them.

Providential Guidance.—And now a word on God's providential guidance. When they had lost all control of their vessel on the open sea, far from land, and when neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, God, as we have already remarked, graciously guided the ship to the first land in front of them. Then nearing the shore, though they could not as yet see it, they cast out anchors from the stern, hearing the breakers dashing wildly against

the rocks of Koura Point,* which are at the entrance of Paul's Bay, and a little to the left of the course which the vessel in the darkness had taken. Had she run on the rocks, would any have survived to tell the tale? But the breakers ahead and the soundings taken had warned the sailors to anchor providentially just where they did. But would the anchors hold? They did. And it appears that the anchorage ground is formed of very tenacious clay, which effectually prevented the ship dragging. So they were kept fast and safe throughout the rest of that night. And then when daylight lit up the scene, there appeared in front that strand, on which they could drive, as they did, the weather-beaten vessel. Shall we not admit the hand of God in all this? An angel of God visited the ship. The eye of God rested continuously on it. The hand of God safely guided it. And the communication from God to Paul was like a light shining in a dark place, and gilding the edge of the thick dark cloud of their misfortunes with a bright line of hope.

Melita.—Safe on shore, they learnt †—*i.e.*, Paul and all—where they were. An island they knew, for Paul had predicted that. Now its name they learnt was Melita. Into the controversy, now definitely settled by Mr. Smith of Jordan Hill, in his *Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, as to the relative claims of Malta, or Meleda, a small island in the Adriatic, to have been the scene of the shipwreck, we need not enter. The claims of Meleda have been quite

* In 1810 the British frigate *Lively* was wrecked at night off Koura Point. It was put in evidence at the court martial that the land could not be seen even at a distance of a quarter of a mile away, though the surf on the shore was discernible. A north-east wind makes the surf beat on the Point with great violence (Article "Melita" in *Imperial Bible Dictionary*).

† We should here read, "We knew." For Paul, who had foretold the approaching shipwreck on an island, knew not what that island would be till they had landed. Its name had not been disclosed beforehand.

put out of court. The well-known island of Malta, anciently called Melita, was without doubt the one on which the ship was driven; and Paul's Bay is the place where it was lost. The island had been long known, colonised anciently by Phœnicians; but since the second Punic war it had passed from under the Carthaginians to the Romans, about B.C. 218, in whose hands it was when Luke wrote, and subject to the proprætor of Sicily.

Barbarians.—The inhabitants Luke terms Barbarians, meaning that their language was neither Greek nor Latin. Certainly they were not *barbarous*; for they received the shipwrecked men most kindly, and ministered to them, kindling a fire because of the rain, and because of the cold. Wet and cold must those two hundred and seventy-six men have been, considering the way they had been saved. But large as their company was to be thrown thus suddenly on the islanders, they found the kindness of the latter equal to the occasion. Who the new-comers were, beyond the fact that some of them were Romans, the islanders probably knew not. Soon, however, were they to hear that one of the company, of no commanding exterior, nor eloquent in speech, was anything but a common person; and further, that his unexpected visit to the island would be fraught with blessing to the sick and suffering in their midst. How they first discovered something about Paul we are now to hear.

A fire kindled, Paul, ever ready to help, collected some sticks to feed it. And now a word spoken by One in Palestine years before, and of whom all the islanders were as yet ignorant, was to come true, and they were to be eye-witnesses of it. A viper, aroused from its dormant condition by the heat of the fire, having been unawares taken up by Paul with the sticks, came out of the heat and fastened on the Apostle's hand. A venomous snake all knew it to be, and one indigenous to the island. His fate they, the natives, thought was sealed. To be poisoned by it he could not

escape, even if perchance his life was spared. Perfectly familiar with the effects of the bite of such a reptile, they watched to see its victim swell or to fall down dead. To their surprise neither happened. He quietly shook it off into the fire.

Seeing it fastened to his hand, they formed an unfavourable opinion of the Apostle. No doubt, was their thought, that he is a murderer whom Vengeance, or Justice,* suffereth not to live. He had escaped drowning. By the bite of the viper he would now be killed. Learning, probably, that he was a prisoner on his way to Rome, they the more readily jumped to this conclusion. But when, after shaking off the venomous creature, Paul felt no pain, they as quickly changed their minds, and jumped to the conclusion that he must be a god. All wrong we know they were, and ignorant, of course, of our Lord's promise to His disciples (Mark xvi. 18). Yet they were unbiassed witnesses of the faithfulness of the Lord to His word. That it was a venomous snake there can be no doubt. The expectations of the islanders and their surprise at the result attest that. That Paul was unharmed by the reptile is also beyond dispute. Miraculous it was all must admit. But instead of Vengeance pursuing its victim, it was God attesting that Paul was His servant.

Publius.—From the shore where they had congregated at first, we are next taken to the house of Publius, called *the chief man* of the island. This was his official designation—viz., *First or Chief of the Melitæans.*† Kind had been

* The ancients viewed *Diche—i.e.*, Justice—as a goddess. It has been said that there are no vipers in the island, nor wood either. But Mr. Lewin, visiting Paul's Bay in 1853, writes of a viper, as he believed, about the spot, and a little wood for kindling also. If so late as that vipers could be seen in that now densely populated island, there can be no difficulty in trusting Luke's account that there were vipers then.

† An inscription found at Civita Vecchia, the ancient capital of the island, confirms Luke's accuracy in thus describing the governor.

the islanders. Kind, too, was the governor. Near that bay he had lands, and he received them, and entertained them courteously. Such hospitality was not to pass unrequited. His father was sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul visited him, prayed and placed his hands on him, and healed him (Acts xxviii. 8). Never before in that island had such a thing been known. Healing power entrusted thus to a man was something to those islanders quite new. The report of this miracle soon spread, and others, the rest in the island who were sick, came and were healed. Considering that Melita is only seventeen and a quarter miles long by nine and a quarter broad, and contains an area of about ninety-five square miles, and so about two-thirds of that of the Isle of Wight, we can readily understand that during their stay of a quarter of a year there was time for the welcome news of Paul's powers to permeate the island, and for individuals who had need to profit by them. A wonderful man the islanders thought him when he shook off the viper and had received no harm. What a dispenser of blessing they must have found him to be, whom chance, people might say, had thrown on their shores! The shipmen and the centurion and all the soldiers could have told of the comfort Paul had been to them in the storm. Now the islanders could relate instance after instance of healing, and not merely some relief, but the full removal of suffering. How God honoured His servant, and fulfilled in Paul's case the promise of the Lord, "They shall take up serpents . . . and lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 17, 18)!

To Italy.—Very likely the grateful islanders would have welcomed a longer sojourn of the Apostle. But the time for continuing their voyage drew nigh, and the centurion must have been anxious to proceed, to deliver up all his prisoners at Rome. Spring then came, and they prepared to move on. Now the gratitude of the islanders was manifested. They loaded Paul with many honours, and provided things

suitable for his voyage. Pleasantly, surely, must those three months have passed. No perils encountered, no persecutions endured. And now an Alexandrian vessel, which had wintered in the isle, more fortunate than the one in which they sailed from Myra, was about to proceed; so the centurion put his prisoners on board of her. Her sign was *The Twin Brothers—i.e.*, Castor and Pollux.* They accordingly left Malta, bound for Puteoli, by Syracuse and Rhegium. Their course took them through the Straits of Messina, and through a volcanic region, past Etna in Sicily, Stromboli in the Lipari Islands, and subsequently Vesuvius in the Bay of Naples, and then sighting Ischia with its volcanic cone. Beautiful must the sight have been to the travellers as they sailed along through the Straits, and in sight of the Isle of Capri, formerly the abode of the Emperor Tiberius, and across the Bay of Naples to Puteoli on the northern side of it. Beautiful still is that region; yet more beautiful must it then have been, for Vesuvius had not begun to manifest the devastating power that lurked within it.

To Rome.—Arrived at Puteoli, a stay of seven days was allowed, which Paul spent in intercourse with the Christians at that seaport. Then they commenced the land journey to Rome, distant about one hundred and forty-one miles. At Sinuessa, about thirty-three miles on their way, they fell into the Appian Way, which connected Rome with Brundusium, and then travelled along it. This road, a trunk one, was well provided with horses, vehicles, and halting-places. How they travelled Luke has not informed us. At Terracina, on their way, a canal could be utilised, or they might still travel by road, the two meeting, and the canal ending, northward at Appii Forum, where they were welcomed by a company of Christians, who had come from the capital thus far, forty-three miles.

* "These two were viewed as helpers of sailors, and generally as protectors in dangers" (Meyer).

Why Appii Forum was the meeting-place may be understood, as has been suggested, because, there the canal and the road meeting, the travellers must certainly pass through it; whereas if the brethren had proceeded farther south, in the uncertainty, perhaps, which route would be selected by the centurion from Terracina northward, they might have missed Paul and Luke. Again, about ten miles nearer Rome, at the Tres Tabernæ, or Three Taverns,* other brethren met them. Paul was cheered. He thanked God and took courage. His chains did not deter those saints from manifesting their love, and doubtless giving substantial proofs of Christian fellowship. How God honoured him, to be thus met! How God thought of him, to be thus cheered! What a privilege it is to be a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ! Now, thus surrounded by them all, they entered Rome, as Luke probably wrote (Acts xxviii. 16).

In Rome.—At last Paul had reached the city he had for so long wished to visit (Rom. xv. 23). What thoughts may have crowded on his mind as he trod its streets on the way to his appointed dwelling-place—a private house! What a time had it been since they left Cæsarea! How eventful! Winds and storms had they encountered; the elements had been against them; but persecution for the time had ceased. From the strife of tongues they had been kept free. The Lord, too, had repeatedly honoured His servant, both in the vessel and at Melita. And now, at the close of their travelling, Paul, as we have seen, was cheered by the presence and fellowship of the brethren who met him. A man of like passions with ourselves, human sympathy and Christian love were not extended to him in vain. And that continued with him through

* Of these two places, well known in those days, *Treponti* is near the site of Appii Forum, for close to the former was found the forty-third milestone from Rome; *Cisterna* is near that of Tres Tabernæ.

life. The visits of that humble brother Onesiphorus he valued much. "He oft refreshed me," wrote Paul, "and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out diligently, and found me" (2 Tim. i. 16, 17). Others may have neglected him—Onesiphorus did not. It was service to Paul which he never forgot. It was a service done to one of Christ's own, and the Spirit would place it on record. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Prov. xv. 23).

Of two days in the city we shall now read, and of two years spent there we shall also hear, but all briefly told. On the third day after his arrival Paul sent for the chiefs of the Jews, and acquainted them with the cause of his appeal to Cæsar (Acts xxviii. 17-19). Ignorant, it seems, they were of the real controversy which had raged in Judæa; ignorant, too, of the bitter enmity of those in Jerusalem against Paul, they expressed a willingness and a desire to hear what he could say of the sect everywhere spoken against. A day appointed, many attended at Paul's lodgings. We see that what had been his practice throughout was his practice still. To the Jews first. As at Damascus (ix.), so in Rome—his own nation he sought out, their welfare he desired. Were those in Rome more willing to listen? Prejudice and bigotry such as those at Jerusalem had displayed the Jews in Rome were apparently free from. But the human heart—what about that? Ah! it is the same everywhere, till God deals with the conscience. From morning till night of that second day Paul spoke to them, opening up their Scriptures, "testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets." With Paul it was evidently not an address just interlarded with a few quotations from the Word, but he opened up the Word. A whole day was he at this task, showing the bearing of many a passage in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the fulfilment likewise of many of them,

all new to these Jews. It was a discourse such as they had never listened to in their synagogue.

What was the result? Some believed, and some did not. So the meeting terminated with a quotation made by Paul from Isa. vi. 9, 10, from the Septuagint. The state of the nation was hopeless. What it had been in the Lord's day (Matt. xiii. 14, 15) that it was still. And the prophetic announcement of Isaiah received that day in Rome a sad endorsement in the refusal of many of the Jews to receive the truth presented by the Apostle. Still was it true, "Yet a remnant shall be saved" (Rom. ix. 27). Some believed. How rejoiced must Aquila and Priscilla have been, who, we may well believe, were present, as Paul on that day opened up the Word, and as some drank it in! But neither the personal presence, service, or ministry of the Lord, nor the subsequent testimony of the Holy Ghost, won the nation as such to grace. Obdurate it had been. Obdurate it continued to be still.

Was God's grace, then, to be offered in vain? No. "This salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles," were Paul's parting words to the unbelieving Jews; "and," he added, "they will hear it" (Acts xxviii. 28). Everywhere the mass of the nation was the same. At Jerusalem, at Antioch in Pisidia, and now at Rome they refused the grace of God.

Two years went on, during which Paul dwelt in his own hired house, receiving all that went to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him. The Jews looked only for the kingdom in power. The kingdom then was, and is still on earth in mystery—*i.e.*, not yet openly displayed—though to be seen now by all true saints, but them only; and entered, too, by all born of water and of the Spirit (John iii. 3, 5). The sufferings of Christ had to precede His glories. This the Jews had not seen, and would not humbly receive.

Paul, then, continued ministering to all who came to him. The Lord thus cared for His servant, and permitted him still to labour. He who had borne witness to Christ at Jerusalem was now permitted to bear witness to Him in Rome. Of the Lord's words to the Eleven on the day of His ascension (Acts i. 8) this book of the Acts in a measure records the fulfilment. The Lord's promise to Paul in the prison at Jerusalem this last chapter of it assures us was being carried out: "No man forbidding him." It ends, then, with Paul still labouring. The Word of God was not bound. Long, long ago Paul personally entered into rest. Yet the truths he contended for and the gospel he proclaimed are, thank God, still heard on earth. In our day some of them have been specially revived. Gentiles still hear them, and some Jews still receive them.

XX.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

FROM Jerusalem to Rome, from God's centre on earth to the capital of the fourth empire, we are taken in this history. Beginning with the Apostles at Jerusalem, the book closes with one Apostle located for a time in Rome. Striking and instructive have been the leading features of the then new movement, as depicted by the inspired writer. Of some of these we would here remind the reader; and ere ending this volume, we would briefly notice the plan pursued by the historian in the prosecution of his task.

Leading Features.—The first of these leading features is necessarily that of the *presence* on earth and the *working* of the *Holy Ghost*, as the Third Person of the Godhead.

Opening with the Lord's announcement of the near approach of the Spirit's coming (Acts i. 5), we see the little company of disciples waiting at Jerusalem for that event. They were, then, an expectant company. On the morning of the feast of Pentecost, without any premonitory sign, the Holy Ghost suddenly came. This inaugurated a new dispensation—that of the Spirit. Poured out then on the company in the upper room, they were all baptised by the one Spirit. The *baptism* of the Spirit of which John had spoken was thus an accomplished fact, and one never to be repeated subsequently to that which took place in the house of Cornelius at Cæsarea. It is a truth, a blessing distinctive of Christianity.

But the Holy Ghost, though *poured out* on Jews at

Pentecost, and on Gentiles at Cæsarea, will be poured out again by-and-by, both on the house of Israel (Isa. xxxii. 15, xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxix. 29), and also on all flesh (Joel ii. 28, 29). For Joel's prophecy yet awaits its fulfilment. Meanwhile no fresh outpouring of the Spirit has taken place, nor have we any hint that such will again take place in Christian times.

A third blessing must be noticed—the *gift* of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit affected the whole company as such. The gift of the Spirit was and is given individually to every true believer (Acts v. 32). This, too, was quite new, never before having been enjoyed as now. The gift continues to be vouchsafed, as individuals come to believe the gospel of their salvation (Eph. i. 13). For though in apostolic times there were occasions on which the Spirit was given by the laying on of hands of Peter, John, or Paul (Acts viii., xix.), the normal way of receiving the Holy Ghost was then, as is now, by faith (Gal. iii. 2). Much resulted from the Spirit's coming.

1st. Of two important events thus brought about we must speak. The Assembly, or Church, then came into existence, and the Body of Christ began to be formed. The first, a future thing in Matt. xvi. 18, is spoken of as in existence on earth in Acts v. 11. The Assembly, too, became God's House (1 Tim. iii. 15), God's habitation by the Spirit, and the Holy Temple began to grow (Eph. ii. 21, 22). For God, who had not dwelt on earth in His House at Jerusalem since the Babylonish captivity, had now a House in which He did dwell, and which He has never left, even the Church of the Living God. Of the Body of Christ we have spoken. Formed by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 13), it is here still, and will be till the rapture. In the Acts (ix. 4) we have the first revelation of its existence in the Lord's challenge to Saul near Damascus.

2nd. By the coming of the Holy Ghost, earth, which

had been bereft of a Divine Person dwelling on it since the Lord's crucifixion, was bereft no longer. And of the Spirit's real presence in the Assembly Peter reminded both Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 3, 4, 9). Then, too, His distinct guidance on earth Peter proved (x. 19), and Paul most markedly likewise (xvi. 6, 7). Of His sovereign action, too, on earth we are reminded in x. 20, xiii. 2, 4. He sent the messengers to Peter. He called and sent forth Barnabas and Saul on their missionary tour.

3rd. By His coming, power was provided for carrying on the work of God down here (i. 8), as displayed in the ministry of the Word, and in the effects of it. Various gifts were now called into exercise,—as evangelists, like Philip; teachers and pastors, like Paul; exhorters, as Barnabas; prophets too, and prophetesses; but each and all are seen in their place, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost they severally carried on their special lines of service. Very different was God's way of working of old. With the sword the armies of Israel went forward under the protecting hand and guidance of Jehovah, and never lost a man, except when they trusted to themselves, and went against the foe in disobedience to God's command, or had an Achan in the camp. Now by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, conquests were to be effected, though many an one might fall in that fight, of which Stephen, Antipas, and others are examples. A new way of working was thus introduced, and one most effective in its action. For Jews and Gentiles alike succumbed. The world, it was said, was turned upside-down (xvii. 6), and the kingdom of God was advanced in Jewish and in heathen lands.

Effective, we have said, was the instrument; and simple, how simple, was the message of the gospel. We see how Peter could preach it (ii., iii., iv., x.). We learn how Paul proclaimed it (xiii.), noting an advance in his gospel. In common with Peter he preached forgiveness of sins, but in advance of that he announced justification likewise

(xiii. 38, 39). Then, too, with the different great lines of ministry of the Word Paul acquaints us, as he enumerates four distinct ones in his address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (xx. 21, 24, 25, 27).

The kingdom advanced by the gospel, the saints needed *establishing in the faith*. Of this we learn in xiv. 21, 22. And assemblies formed, care for the maintenance of order was manifested in the appointment of *elders*. This brings us to notice the difference between *ministry* and *office*, though both might be exercised by the same person (1 Tim. v. 17). The former needed no human authorisation for its exercise, and its continuance is promised whilst the Church is on earth (Eph. iv. 12, 13), its instruments being gifts from the ascended Christ. Church officers derived authority from Apostles or their delegates; but there is no promise of their perpetuation, nor any provision for that end beyond the lives of Timothy and Titus. How perfectly distinct these are in the Word, both as to their origin and objects!

Then, too, the Assembly is seen engaged in spiritual exercises, Christians breaking bread together on the Lord's Day in remembrance of His death (Acts xx. 7); and, as occasion called for it, saints are seen in prayer (iv. 24-31, x. 9, xii. 5, xiii. 3, xxi. 5). A living, active, earnest community had been formed on earth.

These are some of the salient features of the movement. What a movement, then, it was! Like a rushing river, which carries all before it, regardless of impediments, it moved along, neither man nor devil able to arrest its course. The like of it had never been seen. A word spoken changed the current of men's lives, turned them right round, and gave them a new object and a new prospect (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). It was not a national movement, nor was it patriotism, as men use that term, that swayed its votaries. Yet life, liberty, and everything here worth enjoying were sacrificed, if need be, by the converts. It was a movement distinctly

catholic in character, and it knit hearts together in a new and wondrous bond. A fellowship was formed, and expression given to it, such as had never before been seen in this world. No wonder, then, that we have a history of it full of interest, and abounding in almost romantic incidents. And in harmony with the movement, the very history of it is peculiar, unique in character, and unlike any other.

The Plan of the Book.—From the time of the Lord's ascension to the Apostle Paul's arrival at Rome is the period of time embraced by the Acts. Yet we have little else than the labours of Peter and Paul. What were those of James the Less at Jerusalem, or of Thomas, the reputed Apostle of India? Where were others at work, when Paul found only Peter and James at Jerusalem (Gal. i. 18, 19)? Did John do nothing worthy of record, till he finally removed to Ephesus, besides what is told us of him in connection with Peter at Jerusalem, and in Samaria (iii., iv., viii.)? Again the historian of Peter and of Paul breaks off in the middle of their work. We read of Peter's deliverance from prison; then he vanishes from sight, to be seen no more in the Acts, except at the memorable meeting details of which we meet with in chap. xv. As the Apostle of the circumcision, it is plain that he regarded the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia as his especial charge; and we may gather from his Epistle (1 Peter v. 13) that he did not in later, any more than in earlier, years remain stationary at Jerusalem. But where he went after he left Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17); or whither he betook himself after that passage between Paul and him at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11-21); or what he did at Babylon, whatever place we understand by that name,—all this is left a story untold. So, too, of Paul. Beyond the first interview with the Jews at Rome, just after his arrival there, we get nothing but the brief notice of the two years' residence in that city of the most zealous of the servants of Christ (Acts xxviii. 30, 31).

It is true, we can say, that the book treats chiefly of the acts of these two Apostles. It is true, too, we can say, that Luke presents facts chronologically, in telling Theophilus first of the work in Jerusalem, then of its spread to Samaria, and after that of the work among the Gentiles. This is in accordance with the order sketched out by the Lord (i. 8). But whilst stating these facts as facts, we do not exhaust the chief features of the work. To some of these, not touched on in what we have stated, we would now turn.

Had any one sat down to compose of his own accord a history of the movement, would he have stopped, unless prevented by some unforeseen occurrence, just when Paul had arrived for the first time in the great metropolis of the Roman earth? Surely he would have given us a little insight into Paul's intercourse with people when in his own hired house, and some little idea of the way the Word got an entrance into Cæsar's household. Nor would he have refrained from noticing the Apostle before the Emperor at his first trial; and perhaps would have told us a little about his subsequent labours in Crete, and his visit to Miletus, where he left Trophimus sick (Titus i. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 20). And yet we could not say that the history is incomplete or unfinished, like Stephen's speech, or Paul's defence (xxii.), interrupted before the speaker had ended, and with no after-opportunity of completing it. Its composition betrays no such haste; for if Luke had been minded to have extended it, he had doubtless ample opportunity, when with the Apostle shortly before his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 11), of gathering from him all the details of the hearing before the Imperial judgment seat, even if Luke had not been an eyewitness of the events as they took place. But all this is wholly passed over, as well as Paul's labours after those two years so briefly noticed. And why? May not the reason be simply this? The history of the Acts was not intended to give us so much man's work for God, carried

on though it was by the agency and under the supreme direction of the Holy Ghost, but rather to trace out the Divine manner of working on earth by the Spirit for and by men after the Lord's ascension. Hence, when the great features of the work have been set before us, the history closes, never to be resumed.

These great features are *three* in number,—God working in power for His people, manifested especially in Jerusalem; God working primarily by His word, as manifested especially outside Jerusalem and elsewhere; God working in grace toward His failing servant, set forth so beautifully in His dealings with the Apostle Paul. Briefly to express these—the *power* of God, the *word* of God, and the *grace* of God toward a failing servant.

To make this plain we must, at the expense of reiterating some things already noticed, called attention afresh to remarkable displays of Divine power. As we have seen in what has passed before us in connection with the work at Jerusalem, the *power* of God in one form or another is generally the foremost feature. Outside the city the first place is generally given to the *Word*. We have several speeches of Peter at Jerusalem, but they all follow some manifestation of power, and give usually the reasons for its display. At Cæsarea, on the contrary, we read first of God's word by Peter, which, listened to and received, was followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, accompanied with the speaking of tongues. When the Lord would commence the work in Samaria, Philip went down and preached Christ unto them (viii. 5.) He worked miracles as well (6, 7); but we read, "They believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptised, both men and women" (viii. 12). So at Damascus (ix.); at Antioch in Syria (xi. 19-24); at Salamis and at Antioch in Pisidia (xiii.); at Derbe (xiv.); at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens (xvii.); at Corinth too, and at Ephesus (xviii.), it is the word of God, and not the

manifestation of power, that we first read of as arresting the attention of both Jews and Gentiles; and it converted those who gave heed to it.

At Paphos, as we have seen, and at Philippi, we have accounts of miracles worked; but in each case it was to remove the hindrance Satan put in the way of the free reception of the truth already preached. The sorcerer Elymas, a son of the devil, was struck blind for a season, because he perverted the right ways of the Lord, and sought to turn away the proconsul from the faith; and the damsel was delivered from the evil spirit, only after she had followed Paul and his company many days. For if the hostility of Satan could not arrest the progress of the work, the Spirit of God would not receive from such a quarter any testimony in its favour. At Iconium and at Ephesus we have notices of other miracles wrought, but they seem to have been in confirmation of the word previously spoken (xiv. 3; xix. 11, 12). Nor need the miracle at Lystra be an exception to this rule; for it appears not unlikely that the word had taken hold of the impotent man, before at Paul's command he leaped up and walked (xiv. 9). At Jerusalem, with the exception of Stephen's speech, the word follows the manifestation of power. But even in his case miracles wrought by him are mentioned before we read of his power in ministry (vi. 8, 10).

How suited, then, the candid reader will surely admit, was all this to the work to be done! If the Apostles could stand forth at Jerusalem, and proclaim a revelation they had received from God, their opponents in the council and in the synagogue would meet them on similar ground, and affirm therefrom the necessity of adhering to the revelation given by God through Moses at Sinai. Had He not appeared there in the midst of the people when the Tabernacle was erected? and had He not manifested afresh His presence at Jerusalem (Exod. xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11)? They could and did oppose the disciples, as in

the case of Stephen with a revelation as much from God as that which was being declared to them. Did the followers of the Lord Jesus speak of a gift now given to none but those who believed on His name? The unbelieving Jews could point to the many marks of especial favour bestowed on their forefathers. From the time of Abraham to the days of Daniel, Jehovah had often interposed in power on their behalf. For the deliverance of Israel it was that the destroying angel had passed through the land of Egypt. For Jerusalem's sake God had at a later date decimated the ranks of the Assyrian invader. For Israel, too, the sun and the moon had stood still, the stars had fought against Sisera, and for Hezekiah the shadow had retrograded ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. For them the Red Sea had been divided, and the waters of Jordan had stood on a heap, till all had passed over dryshod. For Daniel, faithful to the God of heaven, the angel had been sent to shut the lions' mouths. And with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego a fourth had been seen in the burning fiery furnace, bearing the likeness of a son of God. What nation but theirs could speak thus of God's intervention on their behalf, or exhibit so many proofs of His lovingkindness and tender mercy? How could such arguments be met but on their own ground? If they could appeal to the powers of God exerted so often on behalf of their fathers as a reason for remaining obdurate, let them see with whom and for whom He was now working.

That nation, which formerly had experienced His intervention for His people's deliverance, must now witness His interposition in favour of those they persecuted, and that to death. They had crucified the Lord of glory; but He was now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and had shed forth the Holy Ghost on His followers. At the Temple gate a miracle, which none could gainsay, had been wrought by two unlearned men, professedly in the name and by the power of the One the Jews had so recently

crucified; and when charged to speak no more in His name, those two humble fishermen had bid defiance to the council. They could not make them afraid.

And still greater wonders were done, so that the sick were brought out and laid in the street, that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them for their healing. From within and from without the city the sick and those afflicted with devils were brought, and all were healed. Despite the known displeasure of the council the work spread; so, to stop it, the whole company of the Apostles were next put in prison. In the morning the prison was empty, though bolts and bars were untouched, and the keepers were standing before the doors; but the men lately in prison were in the Temple teaching "all the words of this life." The council now doubted whereunto this would grow. And well they might! No threats could intimidate those men, no earthly power restrain them.

Stronger measures were resorted to, and Stephen was stoned. But here, too, though outwardly seeming to triumph, he really triumphed over them. For rising above the spirit which legitimately characterised Judaism, he cried, not for vengeance on his persecutors, but implored their forgiveness from the Lord. And, stranger still, one who was consenting to his death, and kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned him, this one, who manifested by his acts that he was, and had continued to be, exceedingly mad against the Christians, was suddenly changed on his journey to Damascus. A light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, had shone around; his companions saw it, and, more, they heard him speak to Some One by them unseen, in answer to words addressed to the persecutor, but unintelligible to the rest. In this case it was no weak enthusiast, nor any one seeking a fitting opportunity to declare himself on the side of the Nazoræans; but a man more hostile in spirit to the truth than the rulers themselves, for he had solicited, unasked, letters from them

to the synagogues in Damascus, and had started on his self-imposed mission.

Their most zealous instrument converted, the rulers paused in their career of outward opposition, and "the Church had rest throughout all Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria" (ix. 31), till the civil power, in the person of Herod, essayed to put down the spreading sect, by striking at them in the city of Jerusalem. James, the brother of John, was killed by the sword, and Peter was kept in prison, guarded by four quaternions of soldiers, to be killed after the Passover feast had ended. Twice had he been in prison before. This time, to make all secure, he was chained to two soldiers, and one night only intervened before the day appointed for his execution. But on that night the angel of the Lord awoke the Apostle, and, while the sleeping guards were unconscious, their prisoner escaped them. He left the prison in a very orderly way, leaving neither sandals nor mantle behind him; the iron gate, too, which led into the city, opened of its own accord to let Peter pass and the angel likewise; and he was free. Shortly afterwards Herod, who had stained his hands with the blood of James, was smitten by the Lord, and died a most awful, agonising death.

On whose side, then, was God now? For whom was His power in exercise? Then, too, some of these displays had a feature most peculiar. They were not miracles worked by men, but were the direct interventions of God. The finger of God was thus manifested in that very city of Jerusalem, of which He had said that His name should be there. The arm of Jehovah was again awake, but this time for those whom the rulers wished to put down. In no other place on the whole earth could His power, when exercised, have more plainly declared His approval of the Apostles and of the brethren. Here, in the very centre of those who claimed to adhere to and to uphold the revelation He had formerly given at Sinai by Moses, the Lord

was showing Himself strong in favour of those who announced a fresh revelation from the God of their fathers. God's intervention of old showed that Israel were His people, and that Moses, who worked miracles, was His servant. Who were His saints now? and who were His chosen servants? The high priest and the elders of Israel were arrayed on one side, the Apostles and their converts on the other. On the one side were earthly powers, both religious and civil, and the prestige of many centuries. On the other was human weakness, and a revelation at the most a few years old. Then the Lord Jehovah, by the Holy Ghost personally present on earth, showed plainly in the very metropolis of Judaism, and under the shadow of that House which the Jews rightly called His Temple, who were really His. His acts, His interpositions in power, to all who had eyes to see and hearts to discern, decided the question without equivocation or the possibility of a doubt. How convincing that should have been to their enemies! How encouraging it must have been to them! "The Lord of hosts was with them; the God of Jacob was their refuge."

The importance, then, of this display of power who can question? And why miracles have precedence at Jerusalem all can surely see.

But the Apostles and others had a work to do,—to make known to Jews and to Gentiles that One whom they themselves had been brought to own—the Lord Jesus Christ. How should this be accomplished? By the display of miraculous power? No. By the preaching of the Word. Power reveals God as the Creator and as the Almighty. The Word preached reveals Him as the God of all grace, and tells of His Son, of Divine love now manifested, and of the effects of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Hence the next thing we see is the manifestation of the efficacy of the Word of the Lord, and its suitability for all classes and nations—Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, as well barbarians as the most highly civilised.

Were the religion of Jesus only to be propagated by power, those who succeeded the apostolic age might well have trembled and shrunk back, appalled at the task before them. But since it was to be propagated by the Word, the same Word which was effectual then can be effectual still—God's Word applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost, the same Divine remedy suited for that age being equally suited for this. Whatever be the condition of darkness and ignorance now, it is not worse than that which reigned at Thessalonica or Lystra. Whatever be the pitch of civilisation, refinement, and intellectual activity that the world may now exhibit, it will not surpass what could be met with formerly in Rome, Corinth, or Athens. The preached Word was the suited instrument then; it is equally suited for the civilised world now.

Hence outside Jerusalem, as has been stated, the prominent feature was God working by His Word. In Jerusalem the need was first to show that Christianty came from God. The displays of miraculous power attested that. Outside it, and to all the ends of the earth, the primary object was to point out what suits lost man. The Word of God does that. Miracles have then a secondary place—God confirming the Word with signs following (Mark xvi. 20).

But there is something else displayed in the Acts—the Lord acting in grace toward His failing servant. If we speak of Paul's failure, we must not forget the honour due to him, surpassed as he was by none in zeal for the Lord's glory and devotedness to the maintenance of, as well as to the propagation of, the truth. Yet he failed. And the Holy Ghost has recorded it for our warning, instruction, and comfort; because the failure gave occasion for the exhibition of Divine grace towards him. How often do we need such grace! Blessed be God, what was shown to Paul can be shown to any of God's people! How could any conscious of what they are in themselves stand for one moment without the knowledge of it? As then the Lord had

displayed His power at Jerusalem, and manifested the efficacy of His Word wherever preached in the world, He would also display His grace toward His servant, who had for the moment acted in accordance with his heart's desire, but not in accordance with the Lord's revealed will.

Into proofs of this, however, we need not here again enter, but only briefly remind the reader how at Jerusalem, at Cæsarea, on ship-board, at Melita, and in Rome the Lord gave His servant to be honoured and respected. Here the book closes, and the reason for its structure is, we trust, apparent. God working in power; the efficacy of the Word with Jews and Gentiles, educated classes and barbarians alike; the Lord's grace to His servant when he had failed,—these subjects set forth, the historian's object is accomplished. The Lord on high was still thinking of His people. From the Father at His request the Holy Ghost had come, who still remains a witness to the truth, and is the director of the work. And gifts to men from the ascended Christ were, and are, exercising their ministry upon earth. How interesting and precious is all this, and not the least that the last great feature of the book should be the Lord's grace to His servant Paul! For what He was then, that He is still. And all that He was to Paul, that He can be in like circumstances to those who serve Him now.

At this juncture in the movement the book finishes. The object in view was accomplished, and the historian laid down his pen.

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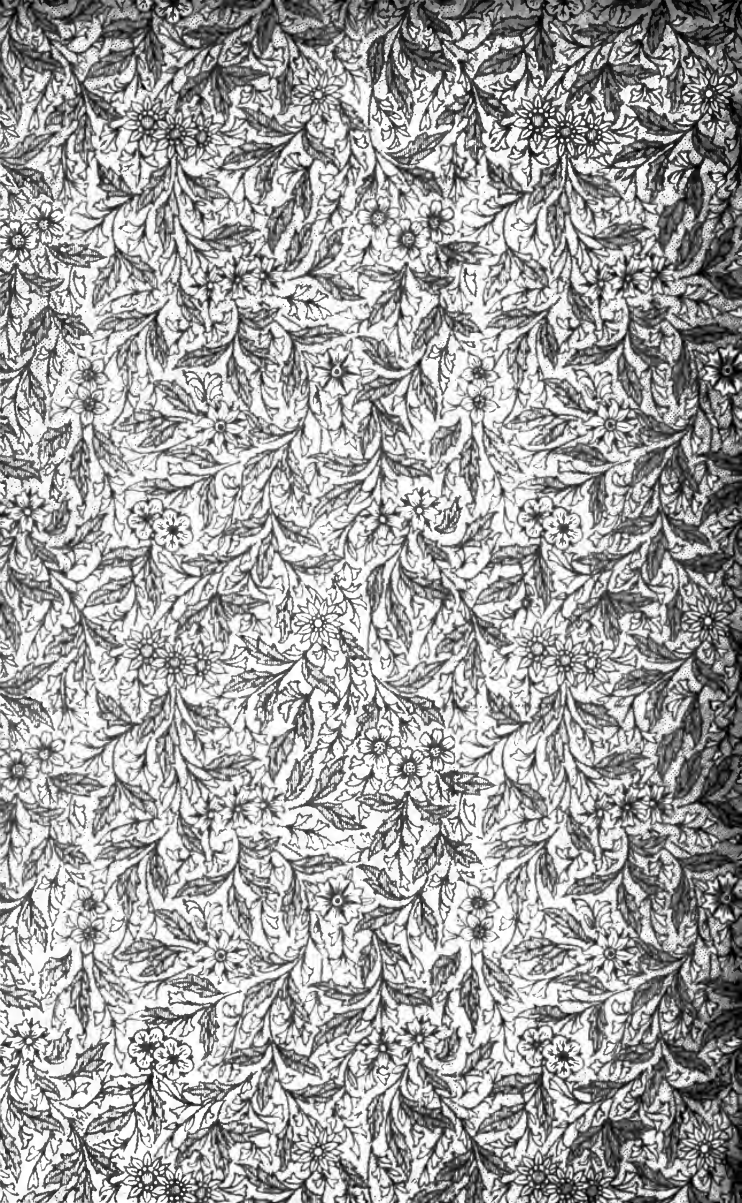
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